

THE VOCALIZING PIANIST
EMBODYING GENDERED PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

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The vocalizing pianist is a genre in which the pianist speaks, sings, and/or acts while playing the piano. Because of the presence of the voice, the audience perceives the performer's sex and gender not only visually, but also aurally as part of performance. The voice connects the audience to the performer intimately, revealing the normative conceptions and gender ideologies inscribed on the performer's body. Because the vocalizing pianist compositions specify neither the performer's gender nor the voice type, cross-gender, cross-identity performance have been freely undertaken without an established performance practice. Although such gendered performances are common in vocal genres, pianists are now entering this unfamiliar field with the emergence of the vocalizing pianist genre.

As a step toward an interpretive performance practice, this document investigates the role of the performer's voice, body, and gender, by reading the genre through the lens of feminism. Feminist theories such as gender performativity and *l'écriture féminine* are introduced and applied to case studies of selected compositions: Amy Beth Kirsten's (*speak to me*), Brian Ferneyhough's *Opus Contra Naturam*, and Stuart Saunders Smith's *Lazarus*. Using the concept of *the Death of the Author* by Roland Barthes, the author also explores the performer-centric interpretative practice that emphasizes the centrality of gender in musical performance. This project articulates the importance of performer's gender as an integral element of vocalizing pianist performance and demonstrates how understanding the gendered aspect of a composition adds greater depth and nuance to the performer's interpretation.

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INTRODUCTION

Performing As a Vocalizing Pianist

I first performed Frederic Rzewski's *De Profundis* (1992) in February 2013. This piece introduced me to the genre of 'speaking pianist' in which the pianist speaks, sings, and/or acts while playing the piano simultaneously. Rzewski's *De Profundis* is a dramatization of Oscar Wilde's book of the same title, which was written during his imprisonment. In this piece, the pianist, as Oscar Wilde, takes the audience on a spiritual journey through the monologue in which his emotions are punctuated by sighing, whistling, weeping, stomping, and self-torturing. This 30-minute 'melodrama' attracted many younger pianists and composers. Because Rzewski first coined the term 'speaking pianist' in this piece, the genre became widely known as the speaking pianist.¹

As a non-native English speaker, my practice method was to imitate the exact inflection of Rzewski's voice in his recording. Although my voice was significantly higher-pitched than Rzewski's, I tried to speak with a lower tone and slower pace, intending to sound like Oscar Wilde of my imagination—a wise middle-aged man. In addition, a voice instructor coached me on my voice and the pronunciation of the text. During one lesson, the voice instructor asked me if I would try to use a British accent. It was a relevant consideration for her because singers often deal with characters that do not match one's own cultural identity, however, for me as a classical pianist, this question was something I had never considered. Clear diction was my priority and I was already exerting great effort to eliminate my Japanese accent. Therefore, I did not perform with a British accent in the end because I thought it would have been additionally confusing for

¹ I have seen other terms such as 'theatrical pianist' being used to refer to this genre, however, I will use the term 'vocalizing pianist' for this dissertation as used by both composer Amy Beth Kirsten and pianist Adam Marks, for it is all-encompassing.

the audience to see myself, an Asian female pianist, speaking the words of a middle-aged British man. This whole experience made me aware that my voice, body, gender, and even my ethnicity affect the perception of a musical performance. This led to an important question: in order for the performance to be perceived “correctly,” would I need to erase my own identity? And if so, how?

Shortly after I performed *De Profundis*, I encountered a piece by Amy Beth Kirsten titled *(speak to me)* (2010). This piece is based on the Narcissus myth but written from the perspectives of the nymph Echo and the goddess Juno. Beginning with energetic storytelling from Echo, the tale ends as a tragedy; Echo loses her voice after she is cursed by Juno.

Outside of the fact this was the first piece I encountered that features female-gendered characters, *(speak to me)* demonstrates a number of interesting approaches to the vocalizing (speaking) pianist genre. One feature is that the text itself does not explain the story, rather, the text functions to create an otherworldly environment for the myth, a world where nymphs and goddesses exist. In spite of the presence of a clear narrative, each character’s words are often unintelligible. The text only exists to hint at the narrative, as if the audience was overhearing the conversation between Echo and Juno. Another striking characteristic is that the piece depicts a conversation in which the performer has to embody two characters at once. Although there is one person on stage, the audience experiences the invisible presence of a second character through the sound of the piano and the voice.

My experience with *(speak to me)* changed my understanding of the vocalizing pianist genre. When performing as both Echo and Juno, I did not have to doubt whether or not my voice, body, and gender were interfering with the audience’s perception of the piece. Performing characters that aligned with my own gender was empowering and made me feel confident. Since

then, I have become aware that gender is in fact a crucial aspect of a vocalizing pianist performance and that the gendered nature of the genre needs to be addressed.

The Vocalizing Pianist as a Genre

The biggest difference between the conventional solo piano repertoire and the vocalizing pianist repertoire is the voice; the voice seems to reveal more personal information.² As musicologist Carolyn Abbate argues in *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, as soon as there is a voice, the audience's attention can be "drawn away from words, plot, character, and even from music" and "the presence of the performer" emerges.³ In this sense, the vocalizing pianist creates a performance in which the audience's attention is drawn to the performer's body. The audience whether consciously or not interprets the performer's body based on a category of sex which evokes gendered associations.⁴ Thus, the audience perceives the performer's sex and gender visually and aurally as a part of the performance.

In vocal genres, such as opera, art song, or musical theater, singers deal with issues of gender on a daily basis because it is common for singers to perform a role that does not match their own gender or identity. For example, a female singer often plays the role of a young boy in operas such as Cherubino in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* or Hansel in Humperdinck's *Hansel und Gretel*. In art songs, singers deal with the persona of the text (who is speaking); female

² Suzanne G. Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," in *Audible Traces Gender, Identity, and Music*, ed. Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessley (Los Angeles: Carciofoli Verlagshaus, 1999), 28-29; Adam Marks, "The Virtuoso Era of the Vocalizing Pianist" (PhD diss., New York University, 2012), ProQuest (3553964), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1316589035?accountid=26417>.

³ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 10.

⁴ Cecilia L. Ridgeway, "Framed Before Know It: How Gender Shapes Social Relations," *Gender and Society*, Vol.23, No.2 (2009): 145-160.

singers sing the lyrics written from a male perspective, and male singers sing from a female perspective. Some art songs manifest multiple personae at once, such as in Schubert's *Erlkönig*. Thus, cross-gender or cross-identity performance has been an interesting challenge for singers to contemplate.⁵ Now with the vocalizing pianist genre, pianists are also facing this challenge.

Unlike most vocal genres, the existing vocalizing pianist compositions do not specify the voice type. This is probably because the existing compositions put more weight on speaking or unpitched vocalizations and less on singing.⁶ Pianist Lisa Moore mentions that Rzewski himself at first opposed the idea of her performing *De Profundis* because he believed the pianist for this piece should be male and homosexual.⁷ Because there have not been many vocalizing pianist compositions written featuring female-gendered characters or written from the female perspective, her cross-gender performance of *De Profundis* opened the door for female vocalizing pianists.⁸ However, due to the unspecificity of gender or voice type in the vocalizing pianist genre, performers are given the freedom to choose roles that would not be assigned if it were an opera or a theater production.⁹ Many female pianists including myself seem to enjoy this

⁵ Robert Spillmann, "Performing Lieder: The Mysterious Mix," in *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rufus Hallmark (New York: Routledge, 2010), 405-420; Richard Sjoerdsma, "Gender Specific," *Journal of Singing* 64, no.4 (March/April, 2008): 405-407; Catherine E. Gordon-Seifert, "Strong Men - Weak Women: Gender Representation and Influence of Lully's 'Operatic Style' on French Airs Sereieux (1650-1700)," in *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women*, ed. Thomasin Lamay (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 135-167; Heather Hadlock, "Women Playing Men in Italian Opera, 1810-1835," in *Women's Voices across Musical Worlds*, ed. Jane A Bernstein (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 285-307; Pamela Hendricks, "Two Opposite Animals? Voice, Text, and Gender on Stage," *Theatre Topic* 8, no.2 (1998): 113-125.

⁶ The pieces that weigh more on speaking or unpitched vocalization include: George Crumb's *Makrokosmos I* (1972); Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XIII* (1981); Jerome Kitzke's *The Animist Child* (1994) and *Sunflower Sutra* (1999); Elena Kats-Chernin's *Stur in Dur (Stuck in Major)* (2002); Derek Bermel's *Fetch* (2004); and David Rakowski's *Not* (2006).

⁷ Lisa Moore, interview by Adam Marks, in Marks, "The Virtuoso Era," 139.

⁸ Lisa Moore performs Meredith Monk's *Last Song* and Elena Kats-Chernin's *Stur in Dur (Stuck in Major)*; however, these pieces do not have gendered characters.

⁹ Pamela Hendricks offers some insightful perspectives on cross-gender performance. Cross-gender performance can be used as an exercise to expand the actor's performance range. However, the assignment of roles for real performances depends on the director. Most often the actors will receive roles that are not too far from their individual identity. See Hendricks, "Two Opposite Animals?"

freedom. However, because the genre itself is a newer genre, the issues of the performer's gender and gendered personae of the text have not been discussed.

Although the gendered nature of the genre resembles other vocal genres, it is difficult to pinpoint the precursor of the vocalizing pianist genre. In fact, the genre seems to lie at the intersection of multiple genres such as opera, art song, theater, performance art, and singer-songwriters.

A key distinction between vocal genres and the vocalizing pianist genre is the quality of the voice. Rzewski emphasizes that this genre (or *De Profundis*) is for a pianist who vocalizes, not for a singer who plays the piano. He comments that the performer needs to be a good pianist but the proficiency of vocal techniques is not a relevant consideration.¹⁰ Untrained voices carry 'peculiar' qualities that bring more personality to the performance, which add a unique element to vocalizing pianist performance.¹¹ Composer-performers such as Meredith Monk and Laurie Anderson effectively use their peculiar voices in their compositions. The popularity of the untrained (or peculiar) voice has been also strengthened by singer-songwriters in popular genres such as pop, jazz, or rock.

Peculiar voices have also been favored in the performance art scene.¹² John Cage and his involvement with the FLUXUS movement in 1960s could easily be imagined as one of the major influences of the vocalizing pianist genre.¹³ The performance art movement reinforced the idea

¹⁰ Rzewski emphasizes the idea that the genre is written for a pianist, not for piano and voice. In other words, voice and piano cannot be separated; the pianist has to be the one to vocalize. See Frederic Rzewski, interview by Adam Marks, in Marks, "The Virtuositic Era," 181.

¹¹ Composer and theater director Heiner Goebbels mentions that his reason to work with untrained singers is because of their voices' peculiar qualities. See Heiner Goebbels, "Peculiar Voices," trans. Susanne Winnacker, *The Drama Review* 55, no. 1 (2011): 46-51.

¹² Marks, "The Virtuositic Era," 28-29.

¹³ Adam Marks also suggests the use of the voice is heightened by performance artists such as Vito Acconti and Yoko Ono. See Marks, "The Virtuositic Era," 14. See also Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

that the performance is “not about ‘doing something well’, but about something else, including the re-examination of those standards.”¹⁴ By putting untrained performances on public display, they questioned pre-established aesthetics and expectations. The use of the untrained voice became popular with the emergence of such performances.

Besides popular genres and performance art, the revival of Dadaism in the mid-20th century inspired Darmstadt composers to explore text, the speaking voice, and the theatrical act.¹⁵ These explorations led to compositions in which musicians performed beyond their specialization: singing, acting, and playing extra instruments beyond their primary instrument. For example, Luciano Berio’s *Opus Number Zoo* (1951, revised 1970) for woodwind quintet, requires the players to recite texts while performing. Mauricio Kagel experimented with the theatricality of musical performance in *Match* (1964), where two cellists play musical ping-pong and a percussionist judges the game. This piece does not employ vocalization, but expands the role of the instrumentalist and makes us aware of how the presence of the performer’s body completes a musical performance.

There are countless examples of compositions that use vocalization of instrumentalists. In Brian Ferneyhough’s solo cello piece *Time and Motion Study II* (1973-76), the voice is used as an integral element of the sound in order to create the ring modulation effect. Vinko Globokar has written numerous pieces for vocalizing instrumentalists. His *Voix Instrumentalisée* for bass

¹⁴ Linda Burnham, “Performance Art, High Performance and Me,” *The Drama Review* 30, no.1 (1986): 36, quoted in Jeanie Forte, “Women’s Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no.2 (May, 1988): 233.

¹⁵ Composer and scholar Eric Salzman provides a useful list of methods that the Darmstadt composers used to incorporate the voice in their compositions. See Eric Salzman and Thomas Dézsy, and Ohio Library and Information Network, *The new music theater: Seeing the voice, hearing the body* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 142.

clarinet (1973) explores the wide range of vocal sounds made through the instrument.¹⁶ The vocalizing pianist seems to have emerged as one of these ‘vocalizing instrumentalists,’ instead of a genre. George Crumb approached the voice more as a dramatic effect than a theatrical one. He first employed the speaking voices of percussionists in *Night Music I* for soprano, piano/celeste, and two percussionists (1963, revised 1976). After this piece, he wrote a number of pieces for vocalizing instrumentalists, including the first solo vocalizing pianist piece, *Makrokosmos I* (1972).¹⁷ Karlheinz Stockhausen also wrote a solo vocalizing pianist piece, *Klavierstück XIII* (Lucifer’s Dream, 1981), which later became the first scene of his opera *Saturday from Licht*.¹⁸ Similar to Crumb’s approach, Stockhausen’s use of the voice is for dramatic effect, not storytelling. Thus, Frederic Rzewski’s *De Profundis* written for the ‘speaking pianist’ became the turning point for this style of music to become a *genre*. Instead of using the voice only for dramatic effect, he combined all the possible elements from the precursive explorations of text, voice, and theater.¹⁹

Thinking of the vocalizing pianist genre as one that originates from multiple genres and that slips away from any of the conventional categorization gives us freedom to move forward without being trapped in pre-conceived notions of what the genre *should* be. Some composers consider the untrained quality of the voice a unique asset of this genre, some composers take inspiration from popular genres such as pop, jazz, and folk singer-songwriters, while others

¹⁶ Another piece by Globokar, *?Corporel* for percussionist (1985), uses the body as the instrument which is supposed to be performed top-less. Percussionist Bonnie Anne Whiting Smith discusses her approach to the piece as a female performer in her dissertation as well as her performance practice of other vocalizing percussionist compositions. See Bonnie Anne Whiting Smith, “Narratives on Narratives, From Utterance to Stories: Finding a Context for the Speaking Percussionist” (DMA diss., University of California, San Diego, 2012), ProQuest (3523844), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1038382362?accountid=26417>.

¹⁷ Marks notes that *Makrokosmos I* is “the first published instance of vocalizations for solo pianist.” See Marks, “The Virtuositic Era,” 21 and 32-33.

¹⁸ In the opera, a bass singer vocalizes, instead of the pianist.

¹⁹ Adam Marks describes *De Profundis* as “the first fully-realized work to showcase the new vocalizing virtuoso in a narrative format.” See Marks, “The Virtuositic Era,” 10.

consider this genre as an extension of operatic tradition.²⁰ In addition, performers have been able to expand the genre by performing popular songs as part of vocalizing pianist-themed programs. For example, Lisa Moore performs Meredith Monk's *Last Song*, Randy Newman's *I Think It's Gonna Rain*, and her arrangement of Brian Eno's *By This River* along with other vocalizing pianist compositions.²¹ Because of these various approaches, the interpretation of vocalizing pianist compositions could vary significantly based on the individual composition and performer. It can be seen as a genre for a next-level virtuoso pianist, as Adam Marks claims in his dissertation.²² Or, it can be seen as a genre for a pianist who is brave enough to share their vulnerable untrained voice, which creates intimate and personal expression. Either way, the genre cannot help but define itself in an unstable category, living at the intersection of multiple genres such as opera, theater, art song, performance art, and popular music.

Research Questions

Taking advantage of this interpretive multiplicity, I will investigate the possibility of a feminist interpretation of this genre. Pianist Milton Rory Schlosser investigates Rzewski's *De Profundis*, applying the perspective of queer theory in his dissertation *Queer Effects, Wilde Behaviour: Frederic Rzewski's "De Profundis."*²³ Similarly, I will take an interdisciplinary approach by bringing in feminist theories to interpret this genre, focusing on the role of the performer's voice, body, and gender in musical performance. By investigating the genre through

²⁰ For example, Stuart Saunders Smith brings his background in jazz and Brian Ferneyhough explores his interest in Schoenberg operas.

²¹ Lisa Moore, "Programs," <https://lisamoore.org/music/programs>.

²² Adam Marks, "The Virtuosoic Era."

²³ Milton Rory Schlosser, "Queer Effects, Wilde Behaviour: Frederic Rzewski's 'De Profundis'" (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1995), ProQuest (NN06572), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/304258757?accountid=26417>.

a feminist lens, I hope to articulate the importance of the performer's gender as an integral element of vocalizing pianist performance.

Without an understanding of the genre's gendered nature, vocalizing pianist performance has the potential risk of perpetuating gender stereotypes contrary to the performer's and the composer's intentions. Thus, this investigation also explores the potential of this genre to become a powerful tool to work toward a bias-free musical environment.

Methodologies and Limitations

With the aim of investigating the possibilities of a feminist interpretation of this genre, my research began with a literature review of feminist scholarship. From this research, two major concepts resonated the most with my ideas of what the genre offers: Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990),²⁴ and the French feminist post-structuralist conception of *l'écriture féminine* (feminine writing) (1975).²⁵ The selected pieces, Amy Beth Kirsten's (*speak to me*) (2010), Brian Ferneyhough's *Opus Contra Naturam* (2000), and Stuart Saunders Smith's *Lazarus* (2014), are examined from the perspective of gender. I will also discuss my own personal performance practice of these pieces, applying the concept of *the Death of the Author* by Roland Barthes.²⁶

Because the vocalizing pianist genre is an emerging genre on which I do not wish to impose any limits, I present my analyses of selected compositions as case studies, that is, as one

²⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, the Taylor & Francis e-Library edition, [1990, 1999] 2002).

²⁵ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 23-33; Ping Xu, "Irigaray's Mimicry and the Problem of Essentialism," *Hypatia* 10, no.4 (1995): 76-89; Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no.4 (1976): 875-893; Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of 'L'Écriture Feminine,'" *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 2 (Summer, 1981): 247-263; *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. Emily Zakin and Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2011 Edition), s.v. "Psychoanalytic Feminism." <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/feminism-psychoanalysis/>.

²⁶ Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 142-148.

way to read these specific works, without suggesting that all works within the genre can or should be read as aligning with feminist ideologies. Furthermore, because this dissertation is dedicated to a feminist interpretation of the genre, I have not included a comprehensive repertoire list.²⁷

In his dissertation *The Virtuoso Era of the Vocalizing Pianist*, Adam Marks presents excellent practical techniques for vocalizing pianist performance, such as vocal production, text embodiment, score reading, and practice methods.²⁸ Thus, I will limit my discussion of performance practice to a feminist interpretation of the genre. Moreover, because the current repertoire significantly lacks female-gendered characters, this project prioritizes female perspectives and does not include a discussion of male perspectives.

Overview of Chapters

My research departs from feminist conceptions of gender performativity²⁹ and *l'écriture féminine* (feminine writing)³⁰, as I turn a lens towards the vocalizing pianist as a genre that both utilizes gendered characters and centralizes the gender of the performer. Chapter 1 explores why gender is an important element to consider in musical performance by viewing narratives of women's musical activity in Western music history. This chapter articulates problems of gender stereotypes that have affected women's musical activity under the patriarchal system. I will also

²⁷ Advocates of this genre including Anthony de Mare (anthonydemare.com), Lisa Moore (lisamoore.org), Adam Marks (adammarks.com), Stephane Ginsburgh (thespeakingpianist.net), and Jon-Luke Kirton (jlkirton.co.uk) are expanding the list of the vocalizing pianist repertoire. Visit their website for information about vocalizing pianist compositions, available CDs, and upcoming performances.

²⁸ See Marks, "The Virtuoso Era," the section "Finding the Natural Voice in Performance" in Ch 3, 48-59 and Ch 4 "Practical Techniques for Realizing Works for Vocalizing Pianist," 61-76. See also Shirlee Emmons and Stanley Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1979).

²⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*; *Ibid.*, *Bodies That Matter: On the discursive limits of "sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

³⁰ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*; Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa."

introduce Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to describe the aspect of the vocalizing pianist genre which demonstrates the performative nature of gender and sex. Chapter 2 discusses the vocalizing pianist as a form of *l'écriture féminine* which celebrates the female expressive mode. I examine the transgressive nature of the genre through the case studies of Amy Beth Kirsten's (*speak to me*) and Brian Ferneyhough's *Opus Contra Naturam* and argue that the genre that re-evaluates the pre-established aesthetic criteria.

Chapter 3 focuses on the role of the material voice and its scandalous nature. Because of the voice's subversive potential against the system of language, the genre creates a powerful performance that can dispel stereotypes and normative conceptions of the female body. I also discuss the vulnerability inherited in this genre that creates an intimate musical performance. Chapter 4 reflects on my experience as a female vocalizing pianist and presents a discussion of the composer-performer relationship in this genre. By applying Roland Barthes' concept of *the Death of the Author*, I will present how the genre empowers the performer to be the *Author* of the piece, thus, it creates greater responsibility for the performer. Using my performance practice as an example, I will demonstrate how understanding the gendered aspect of a composition adds greater depth and nuance to the performer's interpretation. I conclude this document in Chapter 5 with suggestions for future research and potential directions of the vocalizing pianist genre, as well as the social and political implications of performing this genre.

Overview of the Selected Pieces

In this dissertation, three compositions are examined as case studies: (*speak to me*) by Amy Beth Kirsten, *Opus Contra Naturam* by Brian Ferneyhough, and *Lazarus* by Stuart Saunders Smith. These three pieces exemplify different approaches to the genre and raise unique

questions about the performer's body, gender, and voice. I was fortunate to conduct personal interviews with these composers and receive insight into the creative process of each piece. My hope for these interviews was to interrogate how much these composers actually make conscious decisions about the performer's gender, body, and voice. In order to understand each composition in detail, I prepared specific questions based on my own experiences while performing these pieces; the interview questions were unique to each composer.³¹ The transcripts of the interviews are included as appendices.

Amy Beth Kirsten (*Speak to me*)

(speak to me) (2010) was not Kirsten's first piece to incorporate vocalization. In fact, the use of vocalization of instrumentalists had been something that she has returned to many times in other pieces.³² *(speak to me)* was commissioned by Piano Spheres and the California Institute of the Arts and written for the pianist Vicki Ray in 2010. Ray requested Kirsten to write a piece based on a myth because she hoped to present a mythology-themed concert at that time. Kirsten was intrigued by the fact that there was no story written about the Narcissus myth from the perspective of the female characters Echo and Juno.³³ It is interesting to me that *(speak to me)* was written in the same year as the completion of Kirsten's doctoral dissertation, *Becoming Medusa* in which Kirsten argued over the unnecessary of gender-labeling of 'female composers' in the 21st century.³⁴ I find many elements in *(speak to me)* which resonates with some of the feminist conceptions that Kirsten explored in her dissertation.

³¹ See the appendices for the interview transcripts.

³² Many of Kirsten's compositions include performer's vocalizations: *Colombine's Paradise Theatre* (2010-2013) for flute, clarinet, piano, percussion, violin, and cello; *Kiss to the Earth* (2013) for piano trio; *little alice* (2012) for string quartet etc.

³³ Amy Beth Kirsten, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, October 2016).

³⁴ Amy Beth Kirsten, "Becoming Medusa: Taking the current pulse of the female composer" (DMA diss., Peabody Conservatory of Music, 2010).

(speak to me) starts with Echo telling a long-winded story to Juno to distract her from going to catch her adulterous husband Jupiter. Juno fails to do so because of Echo's distraction. When Juno realizes that Echo helped Jupiter to escape, she casts a spell on Echo so that Echo was only able to repeat what someone else said to her. The story ends with Echo's longing for Narcissus, who she fell in love with at first sight. Because she could only repeat what he says to her, Narcissus thinks she is mocking him and harshly rejects Echo. After Narcissus dies, Echo also fades away. What remains is only her voice.

Kirsten explores a dramatic and emotional realization of the story. She writes in her program note:

(speak to me) is a three-part dramatization of the Echo and Narcissus myth. In the first movement (Deceit), we get a very real sense of how the charismatic and fast-talking Echo spins one of her animated stories; we, her captive audience, are left bewildered while trying to keep up. In the second movement (Curse), the pianist vocally portrays two characters at once - the terrified Echo (high breathy sounds) and the vengeful Juno (deep notes)—as Juno casts the spell which leaves Echo without the ability to speak. The first two movements feature both piano and the pianist's voice, but the last movement (Longing) is for piano alone—reflecting Echo's forced silence as she wanders the empty forest alone. The last movement is woven and over those pitches from a motive that yearns for a way to reach out and be heard.³⁵

(speak to me) will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2 in reference to ideologies of *l'écriture féminine*. I will also discuss the intimacy this piece creates in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will focus on my interpretive process for this piece and will elaborate on empowerment of the female body and voice.

Brian Ferneyhough *Opus Contra Naturam*

Brian Ferneyhough is known as the father of New Complexity, the compositional style often characterized by dense and complex notation. Ferneyhough communicates the complexity

³⁵ Amy Beth Kirsten, *(speak to me)*, "Program Notes."

of the world and the performer takes his score as a map, filtering through the complexity and deliver the message to the audience.³⁶

Opus Contra Naturam (2000) was written as one scene of the opera *Shadowtime*. The opera is based on the death of the philosopher Walter Benjamin which occurred on the Spanish border:

Shadowtime explores some of the major themes of Benjamin's work, including the intertwined natures of history, time, transience, timelessness, language, and melancholy; the possibilities for a transformational leftist politics; the interconnectivity of language, things, and cosmos; and the role of dialectical materiality, aura, interpretation, and translation in art. Beginning on the last evening of Benjamin's life, *Shadowtime* projects an alternative course for what happened on that fateful night. Opening onto a world of shades, of ghosts, of the dead, *Shadowtime* inhabits a period in human history in which the light flickered and then failed.³⁷

The opera consists of seven scenes, five of which can be performed separately as concert music. While *Opus Contra Naturam* is a central scene of the opera, the piece consists of the smallest instrumentation when compared to the other scenes. Ferneyhough was interested in having the smallest and simplest instrumentation in the middle as the pivotal scene as opposed to the traditional climax, with loud and dramatic music which employs a large ensemble (or an orchestra). In *Opus Contra Naturam* (Descent of Benjamin into the Underworld), Ferneyhough comments on Benjamin's concept of "Nature as opposed to Artificial" through the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas such as black and white; sin and redemption; and history and memory.³⁸ This pivotal scene takes place in a Las Vegas piano bar where "the lecturer from Scene I appears in the guise of a Joker or Liberace-like singer."³⁹ He is drunk, under the influence of drugs, and is

³⁶ James Boros and Richard Toop, eds. *Brian Ferneyhough Collected Writings* (London: Routledge, 1995), 373; Stuart Paul Duncan, "Re-complexifying the Function(s) of Notation in the Music of Brian Ferneyhough and the 'New Complexity,'" *Perspectives of New Music* 48, no.1 (Winter, 2010): 138.

³⁷ Charles Bernstein, "Shadowtime An Opera By Brian Ferneyhough," last modified April 2014, <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/shadowtime/synopsis.html>.

³⁸ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

³⁹ Bernstein, "Shadowtime An Opera By Brian Ferneyhough."

trying to kill some time. So, he begins talking to the piano.⁴⁰ The pianist is given a role of a shaman and he “leads Benjamin’s avatar... into a shadow world.”⁴¹

When Ferneyhough wrote this piece, he imagined this character to be male because the piece was commissioned by Ian Pace and the opera production was performed by Nicolas Hodges. However, in theory, the character does not have to be male because the pianist in this scene is not Walter Benjamin; the pianist is a shamanistic character who transcends the avatar of Benjamin. Due to this aspect, Ferneyhough acknowledges that the character could be performed by any gender. However, there are only a few female pianists who have performed this piece so far.⁴²

The whole piece will be examined in relation to the ideology of *l’écriture féminine* in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I will view the third movement from a different angle and investigate the possibility of interpreting the piece as one that shares an inner pain. In Chapter 4, I will discuss my interpretation of the first movement as a masquerade of masculinity.

Stuart Saunders Smith *Lazarus*

Based on the biblical story in which Jesus performs a miracle to bring a dead man back to life, *Lazarus* (2014) tells three different stories that revolve around the idea of resurrection. These stories take place in different locations, different times, and feature three intriguing characters: a man who was once dead, a shadow, and a man who tried to commit suicide. The lullaby-like melodies sound as if they are trying to heal the souls of these characters. Coming from Smith’s early career as a jazz percussionist, the harmonic language of *Lazarus* is

⁴⁰ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

⁴¹ Bernstein, “Shadowtime An Opera By Brian Ferneyhough.”

⁴² Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

reminiscent of the jazz genre. The sparse texture in the piano “intensifies the power of the voice and increases the sense of intimacy.

This piece was written for me and percussionist Joey Van Hassel. I commissioned Smith in February 2014 when I premiered his *Still Slowly* (2003) for xylophone and piano with Joey. After two months, *Lazarus* was written. Because this piece is dedicated to me and Joey, it is playable both on vibraphone and piano. I premiered the piano version in January 2016.

Smith is also known as a poet and his compositions often feature unique spoken texts. The stories he uses are usually personal, true stories. This is also the case for the third movement of *Lazarus*. This movement tells the story of Smith’s friend who was a bank robber and tried to commit suicide. At the same time, Smith reveals his own long-suffering depression.

This piece differs from the other two pieces in the role of the pianist. The pianist is not given a particular character to embody. Smith mentioned that this piece follows the jazz tradition in which number of singers would sing the same tune in their own ways.⁴³ The last movement tells the composer’s personal story as if it is the pianist’s own experience.

In Chapter 3, I will examine the third movement, focusing on the sincerity and genuineness that the piece foregrounds. Chapter 4 will discuss my performance practice of the piece, with a particular focus on my approach to the text written in the first person singular.

⁴³ Stuart Saunders Smith, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, August 2016).

CHAPTER 1. WHY DOES GENDER MATTER?

“Without experiencing life, without personality, you have no dance, no kokoro [heart, spirit, or soul], and you are invisible ... but if you have a sense of self, then you can become any character on stage—a woman, a young boy, an old man.”

—— Iemoto Tachibana Yoshie⁴⁴

Gender, body, and voice: these things do not often come to one’s mind when thinking of conventional solo piano repertoire. As the name of the genre explains itself, the voice plays a crucial role in the vocalizing pianist genre. Because of the voice, the audience perceives the performance differently compared to conventional piano performance; the voice draws attention to the performer’s body while revealing personal information about the performer. Many of the pieces in this genre deal with gendered characters. These gendered characters enact the performer’s and the audience member’s gender ideologies. Furthermore, the genre reveals the gendered nature of performance, through the body and voice of the pianist.

In spite of the use of gendered characters, the vocalizing pianist genre has been introduced as solo piano repertoire, which does not specify the performer’s gender. This freedom has allowed pianists of any gender to perform any piece and has offered numerous instances of interesting gendered performances.⁴⁵ Although other vocal genres such as opera, art song, and musical theater deal with gendered performance on a regular basis,⁴⁶ pianists are now entering this unfamiliar field. With the vocalizing pianist genre, pianists can begin to think of their gender as an integral element to consider in the process of interpretation.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Tomie Hahn, “Shifting Selves: Embodied Metaphors in Nihon Buyo,” in *Women’s Voices across Musical Worlds*, ed. Jane A. Bernstein (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 308.

⁴⁵ Pianists such as Lisa Moore, Anthony DeMare, and Adam Marks share the same repertoire while their gender differs.

⁴⁶ Spillmann, “Performing Lieder: The Mysterious Mix,” 405-420; Sjoerdsma, “Gender Specific,” 405-407; Gordon-Seifert, “Strong Men - Weak Women,” 135-167; Hadlock, “Women Playing Men in Italian Opera,” 285-307; Hendricks, “Two Opposite Animals?” 113-125.

In this chapter, I first discuss how gender has been an essential part of music making and the formation of the Western musical canon and aesthetic through a narrative of women's musical activity in Western Europe in the 17th - 19th centuries. Through the literature review, I will investigate how gender has regulated women's musical activity and how gender stereotypes are still impacting current musical society. Second, I will introduce Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which offers an understanding of how our everyday behavior is gender performance. Gender performance is not determined by one's biological features, rather, it is shaped by social beliefs and expectations. By understanding this theory, pianists can create profound interpretations of vocalizing pianist compositions.

Historical Context of Women's Gendered Musical Activity

Everything in society is gendered; it is difficult to find something that is *not* gendered. In order to understand how the concept of gender influences our lives, it is necessary to first understand what gender is. Ethnomusicologist Ellen Koskoff defines three important aspects regarding gender discourse: sex, gender, and gender ideologies. *Sex* is a biological category (female/male), *gender* is a socially constructed category (woman/man), and *gender ideologies* (the systems of belief) provide 'correct' gender behavior.⁴⁷ She further elaborates on the concept of gender ideologies:

The gender structure of a society reflects socially constructed and maintained arrangements made between men and women based on culture-specific gender ideologies. ... although one's biological sex can be, and frequently is, brought into play as a rationale for certain socially defined and acceptable behaviors, aside from the obvious biological differences between females and males, which allow women and not men to bear and nurture children, most other behaviors depend not so much on biological

⁴⁷ Ellen Koskoff, "An Introduction to Women, Music, and Culture" in *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Ellen Koskoff (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 5.

sex differentiation but on culturally conceived notions of gender and on prestige systems that accord value to one gender over the other.⁴⁸

The “socially constructed and maintained arrangements made between men and women” are also called ‘normative conceptions.’⁴⁹ The normative conceptions are constructed based on people’s understanding of what appropriate feminine or masculine behaviors are. What is considered ‘normative’ changes based on time as well as ethnic, cultural, and social situations.⁵⁰

“[C]ulturally conceived notions of gender” and “prestige systems”⁵¹ have traditionally granted value to men over women. As Koskoff suggests, “notions of power and value are intertwined; both must explain the prevalence of male dominance and the resulting subordination of the female in all known societies.”⁵² The intertwined power and value system was first questioned by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949), who argued that language itself disadvantages *Woman*. While *Man* has a voice as the universal subject, *Woman* is only understood through the existence of man. *Woman* is imagined as “the Other,” the reflection of male subjectivity rather than the subject herself. De Beauvoir explained that the notion of gender difference was largely a social construct designed to enhance male power.⁵³ Because this imbalanced gender role is persistently ingrained in Western culture, history has been shaped in the favor of man.

Why is it important to acknowledge that Western society has been constructed based on patriarchal values? By acknowledging this, one can start questioning the objectivity of history. One must understand that the history is highly deceptive because it has been written by the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Francine M. Deutsch, “Undoing Gender,” *Gender and Society* 21, no.1 (2007): 106-107.

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Ridgeway, “Framed Before Know It.”

⁵¹ Koskoff, “An Introduction to Women,” 5.

⁵² Ibid., 15.

⁵³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde (New York: Vintage Books, [1949] 2011), 30.

privileged and the empowered. This also applies to the case of Western music history. As many musicologists have written about women in music, Western music history has been extremely male dominant.⁵⁴ It is not true that female musicians did not exist; in fact, there were many. However, they were often dismissed by the society they lived in, or performed in spaces not regarded as prestigious or important. Therefore, women's musical activity was not properly documented while male equivalents had their names inscribed into history. This explains why women are inaccurately represented in the Western music history.⁵⁵

Musicologist Marcina Citron articulates how patriarchal society has affected women's musical activity. In her *Gender, Professionalism, and the Musical Canon*, Citron claims that the current aesthetic and/or what have been considered masterpieces have been deeply influenced by the male dominant aesthetic, pointing out that the historical musical canon (standard repertoire) significantly lacks works by women. She explains that this is due to the process of canon formation that has disadvantaged women composers: (1) a composition has to be written, (2) the composition has to be circulated, which means that the composition has to be published, and (3) the composition has to receive both a premiere performance and recurring performances.⁵⁶ These steps were difficult for women in the 18th and 19th centuries to achieve because of the social circumstances and strong association of women as amateur musicians.

⁵⁴ Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond, eds., *Music And Gender* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Karin Pendle, ed., *Women & Music A History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Ellen Koskoff, ed., *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); and more.

⁵⁵ As demonstrated in the first version of Grove Dictionary (1870-89) in which only 29 female composers were included, women's musical activity has been inaccurately represented. This problem has been challenged and gradually corrected by the work of cultural feminists and scholars who pursued the field of "Women in Music." See Judith Tick, "Women in music, I: Historiography," *Grove Music Online*, accessed Jan. 30, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.bgsu.edu:8080/subscriber/article/grove/music/52554pg1>.

⁵⁶ Marcia Citron, "Gender, Professionalism, and the Musical Canon," *The Journal of Musicology* 8, no.1 (Winter, 1990).

The first disadvantage for women was the accessibility of music education. In the 18th and 19th centuries, musical compositions were written only by those who were privileged enough to obtain proper education. Women's access to musical education was limited exclusively to practical skills on piano, voice, or harp, which were considered 'feminine' instruments. Until the early 20th century, women's musical activity was largely believed to be solely for domestic leisure and never considered a serious pursuit.⁵⁷ Musicologist Richard Leppert comments on the trivialization of women's involvement with music,

A well-bred woman who took music seriously constituted a threat to social boundaries. Accordingly, most courtesy and conduct literature charged women to view music as but a trivial pursuit, like virtually everything else they did apart from bearing and raising children. The trivialization of women's activities, to men and women alike, was essential to maintaining a status quo based on gender hierarchy.⁵⁸

This prejudice against women was reinforced by the series of new codes introduced after the French Revolution. In the late 18th, early 19th century, women were deprived of their legal and economic privileges and women's proper sphere was regarded as the home. In addition to the newly introduced codes, Romanticism also contributed largely to the male supremacy; the romantic ethos worshiped genius in men while women were depicted as muses who serve men as

⁵⁷ Despite the associations with the domestic sphere and amateurism, singing careers were relatively more acceptable for women to pursue due to a demand for the female voice. For example, French soprano Laure Cinti-Damoreau became a highly respected diva in French society. Women from families of the artist-musician class were also able to succeed as instrumentalists: Clara Schumann is one of the most known examples. Although professional musicians made a living from performing, the prejudice against women performers was persistent, which hindered them from charging equal fees as their male equivalents. While musicians from the artist-musician class were considered 'professional,' musicians from upper- and middle-class families (i.e. Fanny Mendelssohn) were persistently labeled as 'amateur' musicians. See Nancy B. Reich, "Women as Musicians: A Question of Class," in *Musicology and Difference: gender and sexuality in music scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 125-146; Rachel Lumsden, "Women's Leadership in Western Music Since 1800," in *Gender and Women's Leadership: A Reference Handbook*, ed. Karen O'Conner (California: SAGE Publications Inc., 2010), 917-918; Richard Leppert, "Social Order and the Consumption of Music," in *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 63-89.

⁵⁸ Leppert, "Social Order and the Consumption of Music," 70.

their inspiration.⁵⁹ Even though some women had access to composition lessons and became composers, their compositions could not become known. Having a serious relationship with a conductor or an impresario was essential for their music to be published. However, due to the persistent stereotypes and biases, women composers were often not taken seriously. As a result, their work failed to be published which made it difficult for their compositions to receive recurring performances. Thus, under these circumstances, women's works largely failed to be included in the Western musical canon.⁶⁰

The female composers of the 19th century favored writing smaller scale pieces such as salon pieces and romances. Those compositions were "warmly welcomed in the press" because they were considered 'appropriate' for women to write and perform.⁶¹ By the end of the 19th century, the term "salon music" carried with it the connotation of 'women's music' because of the gendered association repeatedly made by critics.⁶² Under the circumstances, although the genre was considered lesser compared to the larger genres, Citron finds it natural that women favored these smaller genres. She explains,

As intimated the larger genres were the public genres. By analogy the smaller forms were intended for more private performance. Gender emerged as a significant distinguishing factor, as women both literally and metaphorically inhabited the private sphere: the prescribed locus of their education, socialization, and fulfillment. Thus it was natural for women to be socialized into the smaller musical genres.⁶³

In fact, these smaller genres such as solo piano, art song, and small chamber music flourished because of salon gatherings. Often organized and directed by women, salon gatherings provided

⁵⁹ Reich, "A Question of Class," 130-133.

⁶⁰ Citron, "Gender, Professionalism and Musical Canon."

⁶¹ Composers such as Louisa Puget and Joséphine Martin championed these genres. See Katharine Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50, no. 2/3 (1997), 358.

⁶² Citron, "Gender, Professionalism," 110.

⁶³ Ibid.

women a female centric, semi-public sphere where they could enjoy casual conversations, reading, or discussions of art and musical performance.⁶⁴

Although women's musical skills were appreciated at home, their "performance" was a difficult concept to deal with. Leppert analyzes the situation,

If the performer was a woman, amateur public performance was extraordinarily difficult in that public "display" directly challenged the very category "woman": it was public, not domestic, and active, not passive; it deflected attention from her father or husband; it opened up the question who was managing the domestic economy while she performed, and so on.⁶⁵

It was not easy for women, whose social interaction had been kept in the domestic sphere, to compete in the public sphere. Now in the 21st century, one may think that piano performance is not a gendered activity, however, back in the 19th century, critics were perplexed by the 'feminine' attitude of female pianists.⁶⁶ The dominant performance practice of the time was filled with "stereotypically masculine qualities of athletic bravura, interpretive and physical power, and showmanship," demonstrated by male composer-virtuosi such as Liszt, Thalberg, and Doehler.⁶⁷ On the contrary, critics did not find artistic value in female performers' "inward engagement" with the music, or their intimate and non-theatrical performance styles.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Historical Dictionary of Romantic Music*, ed. John Michael Cooper (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2013), s.v. "Salon," 533-535; Reich, "A Question of Class.," Jennifer Marie Ronyak, "Performing the Lied, Performing the Self: Singing Subjectivity in Germany, 1790-1832" (PhD. diss., University of Rochester, 2010), ProQuest (3411604), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/521946673?accountid=26417>; Pilar Ramos Lopez, "Music and Women in Early Modern Spain: Some Discrepancies between Educational Theory and Musical Practice," in *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women*, ed. Thomasin Lamay (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 97-118.

⁶⁵ Leppert, "Social Order and the Consumption of Music," 67.

⁶⁶ Ellis, "Female Pianists," 363-364.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 372.

Female pianists struggled not only with gendered criticisms of their performance, but also the institutionalized gendered repertoires.⁶⁹ The virtuosic pieces (including pieces by Beethoven) were considered appropriate for male pianists to perform. On the other hand, Bach, Haydn, and Chopin were considered suitable for women because of their ‘feminine’ qualities such as “decorative and sweetly plaintive expression.”⁷⁰ Even though some female performers performed male-gendered pieces, the music critics of the time did not have a proper criteria to evaluate women’s performance. Musicologist Katherine Ellis explains their perplexity;

How much of her femininity should a pianist retain, particularly when playing male-gendered music? If she gives Beethoven his virile due, is she also to be reprimanded for denying her sex? Conversely, is male-gendered music demeaned by ‘feminine’ performance? If a woman confines herself to ‘feminine’ music, is she necessarily a lesser pianist than a woman who plays Beethoven and Liszt? Here, the ‘sexual aesthetics’ of composition form the backdrop for debates about the ‘sexual aesthetics of performance.’⁷¹

In the realm of vocal genres, the gendered associations of masculinity and femininity had been constantly reinforced by musical performance. For instance, in *airs sérieux* (serious airs) in 17th-century France, male characters often spoke with a ‘feminine’ tone that was highly emotional or seductive. On the other hand, female characters had a bold and assertive voice, a stereotypically masculine quality. However, this trend drastically changed in the late 17th century with the reign of Louis XIV; male lament and effeminate male representation decreased. Instead, masculinized, heroic depictions of male characters increased. Women lost their assertive voice and were mostly portrayed as submissive wives, the traditional social role.⁷² As

⁶⁹Gendered repertoires were institutionalized by Paris Conservatory where virtuosic repertoires were assigned only to male students. See *Ibid.*, 363-364.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 364.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 367-368.

⁷² Gordon-Seifert, “Strong Men - Weak Women,” 135-167.

demonstrated in this example, the trend of character construction reflects social beliefs, demonstrating and reinforcing gender ideologies and expected behaviors.

These narratives of women's musical activity reveal how musical performance can be gendered and how gender plays an important role in the reception of musical performance. It is crucial to recognize that one's (un)conscious normative conceptions of gender can strongly influence the way one sees the world.

With the hard work of feminist scholars, the notion of gender as a social construct seems to have been widely acknowledged. However, I will revisit the notion and explore how one's gender is constructed in everyday life in the next section in which I will explain Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and investigate what it means to perform vocalizing pianist compositions.

Judith Butler on Gender Performativity

Philosopher Judith Butler argues that both gender and sex are not only social constructs, but that they also rely upon performativity to be made real.⁷³ To Butler, the body is a "passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as 'external' to that body."⁷⁴ Philosopher Michel Foucault argued that the body is imprinted by history; "nothing in man—not even his body—is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other man."⁷⁵ Thus, there is nothing that is 'essential' or 'natural' in our body.⁷⁶ Building upon this idea, Butler suggests that what appears as a natural gender binary is, in fact, a

⁷³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*; *Ibid.*, *Bodies That Matter*.

⁷⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 175.

⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice; Selected Essays and Interviews*, eds. and trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 153.

⁷⁶ Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," *Signs* 13, no.3 (1988): 405-436.

series of repetitive acts, enacted through performance. These performances of gender are so deeply internalized that they anticipate themselves; in other words, the socially constructed idea of gender produces gender performance. Since gender and sex are performative, they are unstable and open to incremental change.⁷⁷ Butler explains;

According to the understanding of identification as an enacted fantasy or incorporation, [...] acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the "integrity" of the subject.⁷⁸

Besides gender, Butler argues that 'sex' is also gendered and constructed. The bodies are governed by 'sex' that functions as a norm because of the reiteration of normative constraints through time.⁷⁹ Thus, both sex and gender are performative, and one's biological features do not determine the construction of sex and gender. One can visualize a liquid that is shaped like a person. The liquid is colorless, however, through cultural inscription with one's 'corporeal signs,' the colorless body becomes shaped into a unique figure which is categorized into two types (sexed), and colored by multiple colors (gendered). Based on time, language, culture, and society, this colorless person can change shape and color any time. Butler's theory unlocks the understanding of gender on the subconscious level and shows the fluidity of gender.

⁷⁷ Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷⁹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.

By interpreting drag performance as gender parody, Butler explains that drag performance reveals the workings of gender performativity. It allows one to witness “the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance.”⁸⁰ She notes,

[...] [drag] reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.* [...] gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin. [...] Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization.⁸¹

Through the exaggerated gender performance, drag reveals the unnaturalness of one’s belief (gender ideology).

As Butler suggests, one’s gender performance is so internalized through repetitive acts that gender performance feels ‘natural.’ This fabricated reality constructs one’s subjectivity which is inscribed onto the surface of the body through these repetitive acts. But, what constructs one’s subjectivity is not only gender. Butler’s theory of gender performativity also suggests that subjectivity has been inscribed on the body. In other words, the subject is constructed through discourse—nothing in one’s interpretation of the body is natural or pre-discursive.

Ethnomusicologist Tomie Hahn discusses the expandable identity through the ‘code switching’ of self using the example of Nihon Buyo, a woman-dominated genre of Japanese traditional dance. Japanese society expects different behaviors and speech between public and private settings, men and women, and old and young. Hahn explains that Japanese people embody the ‘code switching’ of self which allows them to choose their mannerisms, speech, and behavior situationally. In Japanese society, this flexibility is considered an important asset to

⁸⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 175.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

facilitate better interactions with others. However, at the same time, social expectations put too much pressure on them, especially on women. Hahn believes Nihon Buyo has been practiced as a way to liberate women to explore and perform socially unanticipated identities.⁸² Through Nihon Buyo, women fluidly shift their identities from one identity to another, which “passes beyond superficial mimicking.”⁸³ She also mentions that the repertoire of Nihon Buyo encourages dancers to embody identities that are beyond their everyday identities such as young and old, male and female, or even demons and animals.⁸⁴ She analyzes that the embodiment of unfamiliar characters is to “distance ourselves from our habitual modes of self-understanding and to envisage, in imaginative representations, alternative possibilities for ourselves.”⁸⁵

The vocalizing pianist genre offers the same effect as Nihon Buyo. Through the embodiment and enactment of different characters, the performer expands the self and liberates one’s self-image. It also uncovers that no part of one’s identity is essential to the body and that those identities are subject to incremental change, which can be an empowering experience for pianists.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the centrality of gender in Western music history and how gender stereotypes can affect the reception of musical performance. By understanding the performativity of gender, pianists can use vocalizing pianist performance as an opportunity to demonstrate, interrogate, and reveal one’s unconscious stereotypes and biases that may have

⁸² Hahn, “Shifting Selves,” 318.

⁸³ Ibid., 323.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 320.

⁸⁵ Catriona Mackenzie “Imagine Oneself Otherwise,” in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stojar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 139, quoted in Hahn, “Shifting Selves,” 320.

been always present. Thus, vocalizing pianist performance has the potential to provoke the audience to see the world slightly differently, and for the performer to liberate her self-image and expand her ‘self,’ which ultimately might lead to a bias and discrimination-free performance environment in the future. This new challenge for pianists would also enrich their expression and add greater nuance to their interpretation.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the concept of *l’écriture féminine* (feminine writing) and examine the possibility of this genre to ‘rupture’ and destabilize the pre-established patriarchal aesthetic and canon. With *l’écriture féminine*, women's disadvantage is now the advantage. Being an “amateur” is a way for women to express their vulnerability; the “private sphere” where women were long confined is now their major performance venue.

CHAPTER 2. THE VOCALIZING PIANIST AS *L'ÉCRITURE FÉMININE*

“‘Women must write through their bodies.’ Must not let themselves be driven away from their bodies. Must thoroughly rethink the body to re-appropriate femininity. Must not however exalt the body, not favor any of its parts formerly forbidden. Must perceive it in its integrity. Must and must-nots, their absolution and power. When armors and defense mechanisms are removed, when new awareness of life is brought into previously deadened areas of the body, women begin to experience writing/the world differently.” — Trinh Minh Ha⁸⁶

In Chapter 1, I explained how gender plays an important role in daily life through the narratives of women’s musical activity in Western music history throughout the 17th-19th centuries. One aspect that hindered women’s musical achievement was the lack of appropriate criteria for evaluating musical activity. Martha Minow problematizes the issue of evaluation and the notion of equality when applied to people with different cultural backgrounds. She asserts,

Does equality mean treating everyone the same, even if this similar treatment affects people differently? Members of minorities may find that a neutral rule, applied equally to all, burdens them disproportionately. Instructing a class entirely in English carries different consequences for students proficient in English and students proficient in Spanish instead.⁸⁷

Her question interrogates the validity of evaluation based on a specific value system and shows how ‘equality’ reflects the positions of the dominant group.

In the instance of women’s musical activity, musicologist Marcina Citron claims, “women have been subjected to gender-related criticism, placing them in a ‘separate but not equal’ category.”⁸⁸ Thus, assessing women’s musical activity relying on “traditional conceptual modes” fails to be accurate because these male-defined conceptual modes entail misogyny and male supremacy.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Trinh Minh-Ha, *Woman Native Other: writing postcoloniality and feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 36.

⁸⁷ Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 9.

⁸⁸ Citron, “Gender, Professionalism, and the Musical Canon,” 108.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Some philosophers sought to celebrate women's specific expressive mode, called "*l'écriture féminine*" (feminine writing). In this chapter, I will determine the potential for defining the vocalizing pianist genre as *l'écriture féminine* and for it to become a destabilizing factor for pre-established norms and aesthetics in Western musical canon.

Phallogocentrism

The feminist concept *l'écriture féminine* (feminine writing) connects the biological difference of women and women's specific expressive mode. This concept suggests that female expression (voice) proceeds from a different relationship to structures of language than male expression. By seeking expression rooted in the female body and sexuality, post-structural philosophers Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray interrogate the possibility of 'a feminine subject.'⁹⁰

These philosophers proclaimed *l'écriture féminine* as a post-structural critique to *phallogocentrism* and *phallogocentrism* in Western culture. Proposed by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, *phallogocentrism* explains one's psychic development and understanding of the self in relation to the phallus. His point of view, centered around man's anatomical superiority, was critiqued by feminist writers such as Simone de Beauvoir.⁹¹ de Beauvoir writes, "[...] it is understood that being a man is not a particularity; a man is in his right by virtue of being man; it is the woman who is in the wrong. [...] there is an absolute human type that is masculine."⁹² The concept of *phallogocentrism* denies woman's subjectivity and understands woman as the castrated *Other*.

⁹⁰ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 23-33; Xu, "Irigaray's Mimicry," 76-89; Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 875-893; *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

⁹¹ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

⁹² Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 25.

Applying the structural linguistic interpretation to Freudian *phallogocentrism*, French philosopher Jacques Lacan explains the phallus as a symbol: the master-signifier. In Lacan's eyes, a child acquires the understanding of distinction between the self and the world through language (*signifiers*), and language provides the systems in which signs and concepts are represented (the law of the Father). For Lacan, "masculinity and femininity are not biological essences but are instead symbolic positions."⁹³ Language as a set of *signifiers* is organized by the hierarchical order in the relation to the phallus ('the privileged *signifier*'⁹⁴), the phallus as a symbol guarantees patriarchal structure and differentiates men and women; woman is a man who lacks a penis and who only has a position when considered in relation to man.⁹⁵

French philosopher Jacques Derrida coined the term *phallogocentrism* (phallogocentrism + logocentrism), claiming that society is centered around male-defined entities such as logic, knowledge, and reason.⁹⁶ Derrida critiqued Lacan's *phallogocentrism* as being another form of *logocentrism*, which privileges *logos* (language, words, or "a rational or intelligible principle") as the fundamental origin of all meaning.⁹⁷ Language assigns meanings which are, as Lacan writes, hierarchically organized in relation to the phallus. In this sense, Lacan's *phallogocentrism* reveals built-in *logocentrism*. Thus, Western society is governed by *phallogocentrism* in which an internalized system of language privileges man over woman. Derrida saw the potential in women's writing and the capability to "rupture" the discourse of *phallogocentrism*. Because women has been excluded in the discourse of logocentrism, through language itself, woman

⁹³ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Derek Hook, "Lacan, the meaning of the phallus and the 'sexed' subject," in *LSE Research Online* (London: LSE Research Online, 2007), 61, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/960>; Ellen T. Armour, *Deconstruction, Feminist Theology, and the Problem of Difference: Subverting the Race/Gender Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁹⁴ Hook, "Lacan, the meaning of the phallus," 68.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-68.

⁹⁶ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Armour, *Deconstruction*.

⁹⁷ David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), s.v. "logocentrism," 233.

“might provide a real source of resistance.”⁹⁸ In order to subvert the system of representation, philosopher Linda Alcoff suggests that women be “that which cannot be pinned down or subjugated within a dichotomous hierarchy.”⁹⁹

“Women Must Write Her Self”

Proceeding from these conceptions, Luce Irigaray criticized the Freudian and Lacanian conception of woman because “woman does not have access to language except through recourse to ‘masculine’ systems of representation which misappropriate her from her relation to herself and to other women.”¹⁰⁰ Although language itself entails patriarchal values, Cixous saw the possibility “to dismantle the patriarchy through language, specifically by encouraging and exploring women’s language, a language rooted in the female body and female sexuality.”¹⁰¹ Irigaray also proclaimed the exploration of feminine writing that reflects plurality of female sexuality and eroticism, comparing it to the singularity of male sexuality symbolized by the phallus.¹⁰²

In order to destabilize the rational—masculine—subject, Cixous asserts the importance of women writing “her self” [*sic*]. *Woman* must “return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her” and “[her] body must be heard.”¹⁰³ Cixous continues,

To write. An act which will not only “realize” the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have

⁹⁸ Alcoff, “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism,” 431.

⁹⁹ Here, by a dichotomous hierarchy, Alcoff means the dualistic hierarchical associations such as man/woman, culture/nature, analytical/intuitive; Alcoff, “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism,” 430-431.

¹⁰⁰ Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, 85.

¹⁰¹ Forte, “Women’s Performance Art,” 225.

¹⁰² Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*.

¹⁰³ Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 880.

been kept under seal; [...] We must kill the false woman who is preventing the live one from breathing. Inscribe the breath of the whole woman.¹⁰⁴

By writing one's own psyche with the existential standpoint, Cixous seeks to destabilize the fictitious 'woman.' However, it is important to note that *l'écriture féminine* does not imply a certain type of writing. In fact, Cixous writes, it *cannot* be defined: woman has been over-defined and determined through culture and language. She notes,

It is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded—which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatism, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate.¹⁰⁵

Inspired by Cixous's proclamation that, "woman must write woman," feminist scholars of different fields began publishing articles and books to explore and celebrate women's writing. Teresa de Lauretis's *Alice Doesn't* (1984) interrogates the relationship between experience and representation by analyzing the subjectivity of *woman* in films. She attempts to theorize the notion of "experience" by using psychoanalytic tools.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, feminist anthropologists Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, feminist literary scholar and filmmaker Trinh Minh Ha, and feminist ethnographer Lila Abu-Lughod explored their voice in experiential narratives.¹⁰⁷ These scholars explore feminine expressions and attempt to re-evaluate women's writing that does not fit within patriarchal values and narrative structures.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 883.

¹⁰⁶ Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Christine A. Holmlund, review of *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, by Teresa de Lauretis, *SubStance* 14, no.2, issue 47 (1985):102-105.

¹⁰⁷ Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon, *Women Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other*; Lila Abu-Lughod, "Can there be a feminist ethnography?" *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 5, no.1 (1990): 7-27.

L'écriture féminine lets us be critical of the institutionalized standards of writing, expression, and what constitutes the aesthetics in patriarchal society. Literary critics Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar propose the issues of 'sexual linguistics' that exclude women as authors in 20th-century literature. They explain this issue by defining the terms *materna lingua* and *patrius sermo*. *Materna lingua*, a primal mother tongue, is a vernacular speech that children would acquire through their mothers. *Patrius sermo* is a formal language for public affairs that is passed down from a man to another man. By using *patrius sermo*, men excluded women from participating in public affairs. For example, in the 18 and 19th centuries, Latin was used as *patrius sermo* by literary men. However, when women became able to obtain college educations in the 19th century, Latin lost its privilege and disappeared from the main course curriculum.¹⁰⁸ Men tried to re-acquire the privilege of *patrius sermo* by transforming *materna lingua* into an elite language that was difficult, abstract, and obscure in style. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that "male fears of losing linguistic control, [...] Losing much of the gender privilege of education in classical and learned languages, men faced the rising power of ordinary language that gave them no special fluency compared to women."¹⁰⁹ In this sense, the *écriture féminine* movement was for women to retrieve their position as authors writing in their 'original' *materna lingua*.

Applying these theoretical concepts, I will now analyze Amy Beth Kirsten's (*speak to me*) and Brian Ferneyhough's *Opus Contra Naturam*. These two pieces seem to demonstrate the quality of *l'écriture féminine* in distinctively different ways. They both manifest transgressive qualities that subvert pre-established norms and aesthetics in Western musical canon.

¹⁰⁸ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century, Vol. 1, The War of the Words* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988); Kathleen Blake, review of *No Man's Land* by Gilbert and Gubar, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 88, no. 3 (1989): 454-57, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu:8080/stable/27710224>.

¹⁰⁹ Blake, review of *No Man's Land*, 456.

The Vocalizing Pianist as *l'écriture féminine*

Case Study 1: Amy Beth Kirsten (*speak to me*)

Amy Beth Kirsten's (*speak to me*) offers numerous transgressive readings that resonate with the style of *l'écriture féminine*, one of which is demonstrated through unconventional storytelling techniques. Instead of using the text as a monologue, such as in Rzewski's *De Profundis* (1992), Kirsten depicts a conversation between Echo and Juno. The first movement begins with Echo's energetic storytelling. While the pianist's voice is employed only for Echo, Juno's presence is portrayed with the cluster chords in the low register (see Example 1). Juno is not speaking, but it does not mean she does not exist; her body is there, listening. As Juno becomes more suspicious of Echo for hiding something from Juno, the cluster chords appear more frequently. Through the cluster chords, Kirsten sonically acknowledges the presence of Juno's body and her emotional state. Kirsten's careful and considerate treatment towards those who listen (*Woman, the Other*) is manifested here, creating an inclusive, feminist environment.

EXAMPLE 1: Amy Beth Kirsten (*speak to me*), Movement I, mm.25-32¹¹⁰
 Juno's suspicion towards Echo, circled in red.

The musical score for Example 1 consists of two systems of music. The first system (measures 25-28) shows a vocal line with lyrics: "am] and then [x] well there deep in-side the for - - rest al - ways [se di we de we de". Above the vocal line are performance instructions: "(exhale)", "with an air of hope", and "carefree Echo gets more elaborate and animated". The piano accompaniment features cluster chords in the low register, which are circled in red. Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, and *pp*. The second system (measures 29-32) continues the vocal line with lyrics: "A hu: A di we] [si ki di e wi ki di ki di ki di ki wan] [si ki di e wi ki di ki di ki di ki we]". The piano accompaniment continues with cluster chords, also circled in red. Dynamics include *f*, *mp*, and *pp*. A performance instruction "(Juno's suspicion is confirmed)" is placed above the piano part in measure 30.

¹¹⁰ Amy Beth Kirsten, (*speak to me*) (New Haven: Bad Wolf Publishing, ASCAP, 2010), 3. ©Copyright 2010 Bad Wolf Publishing, ASCAP. Reproduced by kind permission of Bad Wolf Publishing.

Kirsten also uses an acoustic trick, creating a situation where “the audience is eavesdropping on this scene.”¹¹¹ Echo’s voice frequently alternates from intelligible English to gibberish while the piano enhances the effect by crescendoing to cover up the voice while the voice diminuendos (see Example 2). With this effect, Kirsten allows the audience to experience the scene from the perspective of a “voyeur.”¹¹² This approach requires the audience’s active participation in listening, keeping them on their toes because they cannot make sense.

EXAMPLE 2: Amy Beth Kirsten (*speak to me*), Movement I, mm.1-5¹¹³

This movement allows some freedom for the performer to be creative. The performer can invent her own gibberish and use inflection in a way that she prefers. Although the vocal line is notated in a treble clef indicating the approximate inflection of the speech, Kirsten notes, “If you desire, let your own vocal range and sense of drama dictate the vocal sounds that you make.”¹¹⁴ This creative freedom that Kirsten offers empowers the performer to feel more connected to the character and to own the piece. She gives the similar freedom at the beginning of the second movement where Juno’s vocal line does not contain the text. It is noted as “whisper/hiss any of the text from the poem, in any order, any rhythm.”¹¹⁵ The creative freedom opens the

¹¹¹ Amy Beth Kirsten, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, October 2016).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Kirsten, (*speak to me*), 1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., “Performance Note.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

performance up to the plurality of *l'écriture féminine* because each performer would perform the same piece differently, connecting her voice and body.¹¹⁶

The second movement is particularly unique; it portrays a battle between Echo and Juno in which the performer has to embody two characters at once. Here again, Kirsten's approach to the genre represents the plurality, not the singularity. The furious goddess Juno is "so angry at first, it's as if she can barely move her mouth."¹¹⁷ The more Juno raises her voice, the more timid Echo becomes. The text used here is written by Mariko Nagai and consists of only 14 different kinds of words:

First
 You
 You shall
 You shall have
 No power
 You shall still have
 Power to speak
 But no power
 To speak
 First
 You still have
 The last word
 To speak first
 But no last
 Word
 You shall
 You shall have
 No power
 To first speak
 The last word
 The word
 Speaks
 No power
 No first
 No you
 You have no
 No power no

¹¹⁶ This concept derives from Luce Irigaray's remark: the plurality of female sexuality contrasting to the singularity of the male sexuality.

¹¹⁷ Kirsten, (*speak to me*), 6.

Have you no
 Shall
 You
 You shall
 You
 First¹¹⁸

The more intense the battle gets, the more words are spelled phonetically. It shows that Juno is losing her logical mind and becoming more emotional. Juno's spell makes Echo only repeat what is spoken to her first. Echo tries to resist the spell throughout the movement but cannot. Her resistance is illustrated in mm. 113; when Juno says "first," Echo says "free," which is not a part of the text. Kirsten notes, "the word 'free' isn't technically a part of the poem, but rather is a hybrid of the words 'first' and 'speak.'"¹¹⁹ This movement grows faster and faster as Juno's spell becomes stronger. The constant pushing of the pulse depicts the oppression Echo is facing against (see Example 3). Echo, a storyteller (a speaking subject), is being deprived of the ability to speak. This situation parallels with *Woman*, who is deprived of her role as a speaking subject through the oppression of language itself.

EXAMPLE 3: Amy Beth Kirsten (*speak to me*), Movement II, mm.91-97¹²⁰

The image displays a musical score for Example 3, consisting of two systems of vocal and piano parts. The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics: "word word speak speak no speak no pa: a: a: a: no you first shall no speak". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The second system begins at measure 95 and includes performance instructions: "A little more broadly" (tempo marking), "poco accel." (tempo marking), and "mf" (dynamic marking). The lyrics for the second system are: "you se you lu: ju: se have he no se pow'r se no sou have sou you sou shall you shall you". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern, and the tempo is marked as "♩ = 80".

¹¹⁸ Text by Mariko Nagai, in Kirsten (*speak to me*).

¹¹⁹ Kirsten, (*speak to me*), 10.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

In the first two movements, Kirsten chooses to spell most of the text phonetically and only handful of words are intelligible; the text transforms language into a series of sounds. These sounds are enacted by the performer with emotions. Non-lexical utterance connects emotion with the primal body: the body before entering the world governed by the system of language.¹²¹ With the emotional utterance of non-lexical text, Kirsten prioritizes each character's feelings instead of logic, knowledge, and reason (which are the attributes to *phallogocentrism*). By turning language into an utterance, Kirsten portrays emotions using the power of the voice, which can subvert the hierarchical order of language.¹²²

The third movement shows how “the vocalizing pianist” positions itself as transgression in the realm of musical performance. George Crumb added the pianist's vocalization in *Makrokosmos I* as a surprise factor. He states, “When a pianist speaks or sings, the audience is absolutely mesmerized because they don't expect it.”¹²³ The audience is betrayed by the fact the pianist actually has a voice that speaks. This awareness implies that the pianist is ‘expected’ to be silent as a servant of music. Therefore, as pianist Milton Schlosser argues in his dissertation *Queer Effects, Wilde Behaviour: Frederic Rzewski's “De Profundis,”* performance of the vocalizing pianist reveals “silences and regulations [that] are [historically] imposed upon the pianist's body”¹²⁴

(speak to me) unveils the silencing of the pianist's body by normalizing the pianist's vocalization with the first two movements. After two movements full of vocalization, in the third movement, the pianist never speaks; the pianist as Echo is no longer able to speak because of Juno's curse. In this case, the silenced pianist—a normative performance convention—becomes

¹²¹ Lacanian conception of *phallogocentrism*. See Hook, “Lacan, the meaning of the phallus,” 60-68.

¹²² See Chapter 3 for the discussion of the voice's subversive quality against the system of language.

¹²³ George Crumb, interview by Adam Marks (June 6, 2007), in Marks, “The Virtuositic Era of the Vocalizing Pianist,” 46.

¹²⁴ Schlosser, “Queer Effects,” 6.

transgressive, evoking the imagery of voiceless *Woman*, the *Other*. With the first two movements, Kirsten allows the audience to be accustomed to the transgression (the pianist's vocalization). Once the transgression is normalized, the third movement goes back to a conventional piano performance in which the pianist does not speak. However, it no longer feels conventional, in fact, now the silenced pianist is seen as transgressive. By normalizing the pianist's vocalization in the first two movements, the silencing inscribed on the pianist's body becomes visible in the third movement. Even though there is no word, the audience now sees the pianist's body as Echo's and empathizes with Echo's pain.

At the end of the myth, Echo dies from the shock of Narcissus's death and her body disappears but her voice remains in this world. Through the sonic depiction of her voice in the piano part, this movement can be also interpreted as a depiction of her body-less voice. The voice always anticipates the body, but now Echo's voice is no longer corporeal because her body has disappeared. Kirsten mentioned that this movement represents Echo's memory, regret, and despair through the repetition of the same pitch materials of the phrase "Can't you hear in my voice I love you"¹²⁵ which is sung in the first movement.¹²⁶ Fragments of the notes Bb-D-Eb-D-C appear over and over throughout the piece while F# and G follows Echo's voice. In fact, F# and G are the first notes used to describe Juno's suspicion (movement 1) and Juno's theme (movement 2).

¹²⁵ Kirsten, (*speak to me*), 2-3.

¹²⁶ Amy Beth Kirsten, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, October 2016).

EXAMPLE 4: Amy Beth Kirsten (*speak to me*), Movement I, mm.21-22¹²⁷
Echo's singing voice (top clef) and Juno's suspicion (bottom clef).

verklemt (exhale) sing actual pitches if poss. -----

[x] Can't you hear in my voice...

pp mp

22 mp 3

I love you? She just...

with sadness (sprechstimme)

p 3

pp (Juno suspects something)

EXAMPLE 5: Amy Beth Kirsten (*speak to me*), Movement II, mm.53-56¹²⁸
Juno's motive starting with F# & G.

53 hissing f* pp f

channel your inner funk machine - lean into, and lengthen the offbeats

f pp

EXAMPLE 6: Amy Beth Kirsten (*speak to me*), Movement III, mm.140-143¹²⁹
Echo's pitch material in red, Juno's in blue.

Più mosso ♩ = 80

p

ppp bring out notes with stems up

* Ped.

¹²⁷ Kirsten, (*speak to me*), 2-3.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 12.

Kirsten also states that this movement depicts Echo's psychological state from loneliness and sadness to panic, then in the end, she accepts what she has become.¹³⁰ In mm.194, Echo's daydream is portrayed through almost non-existent chords (notated with white noteheads) with accented grace notes which outline Echo's motive of the first movement. The white notehead chords are played using the piano's escapement mechanism, which creates a specific muffled and delicate sound. Echo is brought back from daydreaming by the Bb-A motive which is the first two notes of the first movement. Like this example, Echo's regrets are portrayed through the repetitive motives of Echo's and Juno's pitch materials throughout the piece.

EXAMPLE 7: Amy Beth Kirsten (*speak to me*), Movement III, mm.189-195¹³¹

By making this movement the longest, Kirsten successfully conveys Echo's sadness and longing without a word (Movement I - Deceit (1'30''), Movement II - The Curse (4'37''), and Movement III - Longing (6'00'')). Contrasting to the fast paced and dramatic first two movements, she conveys Echo's emotional state with steady, repetitive, and quiet figures.

L'écriture féminine is not only about one's conscious decision to write in the style that disrupts *phallogocentrism*, rather, *l'écriture féminine* can manifest itself in writing that explores an individual's own expression as the act of writing the 'self.' Although Kirsten mentioned in my

¹³⁰ Amy Beth Kirsten, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, October 2016).

¹³¹ Kirsten, (*speak to me*), 15

interview that she is not interested in creating a feminist political agenda through her music,¹³² her music demonstrates the essence of *l'écriture féminine*, as I have shown in my analysis. By interpreting (*speak to me*) as a feminist work, I am able to make a more profound connection with the music. Moreover, my performance empowers women, resonating with the feelings and the pain of the *Other*, through the embodiment of Echo's voiceless body.

Case Study #2: Brian Ferneyhough *Opus Contra Naturam*

L'écriture féminine does not only appear in women's writing. In fact, philosopher Julia Kristeva finds the quality of *l'écriture féminine* in the writings of James Joyce, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Antonin Artaud.¹³³ Cixous also admires these writings for their 'anti-phallogentric' quality; their texts are constructed "against rules and regularities of conventional language."¹³⁴ Defining *l'écriture féminine* as a concept that destabilizes pre-established rules and regulations that have been inscribed in the system of language, I would argue that *Opus Contra Naturam* demonstrates the quality of *l'écriture féminine*.

Opus Contra Naturam depicts the scene in the opera where Walter Benjamin's philosophical thought, or his avatar, is descending down to the shadow world. The scene takes place in a piano bar in Las Vegas. The piece does not take a conventional narrative scheme; the text itself does not narrate the situation. The audience will not realize what is exactly happening. Arnold Whittall suggests that Ferneyhough followed the path of 'anti-operatic opera' which has been cultivated by Luigi Nono (*Prometeo*, 1985) and Helmut Lachenmann (*Little match-seller*, 1990-1996). Whittall also writes that Ferneyhough's strategy might be a form of a homage to

¹³² Amy Beth Kirsten, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, October, 2016).

¹³³ Jones, "Writing the Body," 248-249.

¹³⁴ Luce Irigaray holds a different position from Kristeva and Cixous. Irigaray claims that "women have a specificity that distinguishes them sharply from men." Their different perspectives of *l'écriture féminine* is thoroughly explained in Jones "Writing the Body," 248-252.

Benjamin because Benjamin believed that “works of art are more interesting and provocative the more imperfect their fit into any supposed genre.”¹³⁵

In the first movement, the Liberace-like pianist starts to ask absurd questions to the piano and answers for himself. As Ferneyhough states, this movement employs an “incredibly academic” text.¹³⁶ The pianist’s voice is the foreground material while the combination of the highest and the lowest register on piano faintly sounds in the background. During this first movement, the pianist physically creates the imagery of Crucifixion; both arms are spread out and the body is hovering over the keys (see Example 8). The text is to be recited in a way that an Oxbridge professor would speak.¹³⁷ At this point, the pianist seems to be in a total control of the situation.

EXAMPLE 8: Brian Ferneyhough *Opus Contra Naturam*, Movement I, mm. 1¹³⁸

However, in the second movement, titled *Katabasis*, the piano reveals its own psyche, reacting against the pianist because it wants to play a tonal music.¹³⁹ The piece opens with an (014) trichord. The pianist continues but the piano wants to play wider intervals, (015) and (016).

¹³⁵ Graeme Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin: critical constellations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 69, quoted in Arnold Whittall, “Connections and Constellations,” *The Musical Times* (Summer 2003), 27.

¹³⁶ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016); See Chapter 4, Case Study# 6 for the detailed discussion of the first movement.

¹³⁷ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

¹³⁸ Brian Ferneyhough, Charles Bernstein, and Walter Benjamin, *Shadowtime* (London: Edition Peters, 2007), 249. © Copyright 2000 by Peters Edition Limited, London. Reproduced by kind permission of Peters Edition Limited, London.

¹³⁹ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

In mm.2, the pianist plays an octave in the right hand, then re-starts the phrase with a (013) chord. However, the piano still insists on playing wider intervals (015) and (016) again. In mm.4, The pianist plays C6 and D4 with the left hand, trying to control the situation while the piano answers with (027) and (016) trichords. The pianist now plays an elaborated line with (013), (014), and (015) trichords in mm.5, but somehow it ends up with (016) trichords. The piano's desire to play tonal music becomes more clear in mm.6 where a C#M (DbM) in the left hand, and AbM, AM, and Bm appear in the right hand. The pianist loudly plays a M7 chord (Bb3 and A4) to scold the piano. At mm. 9, the piano emphasizes an E-diminished chord in the left hand and the right hand follows with Bm7, Cm7, and a vertically-stacked (027) chord. Although (027) trichords have been inserted a few times, it now appears as a quartal chord making it sound like jazz (mm.10) (see Example 9 & 10). As Ferneyhough stated, “[W]e are dealing here with the elevated and the banal coming together. The high, expressionistic, twentieth-century piano comes into crushing contact with the sleazy bar somewhere in Las Vegas.”¹⁴⁰

Ferneyhough depicts the interaction between the pianist and the piano both sonically and visually. The pianist plays extremely difficult music which forces him to quickly shift to different registers. Visually he looks like being shaken left to right all over the keys, as if he cannot control his body because the piano is now in control of him. Pianist Nicolas Hodges comments that the pianist in this movement is “strapped to this piece,” “as if [he is] being electrocuted.”¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

¹⁴¹ Tom Service, “Belt up and hold tight,” *The Guardian* (January 21, 2003), <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2003/jan/21/broadcasting.arts1>.

EXAMPLE 9: Brian Ferneyhough *Opus Contra Naturam*, Movement II, mm. 1-9¹⁴²

II
Katabasis

The score is divided into three sections:

- Tempo I:** $\text{♩} = 71$, *con urgenza*, *marcato*. Includes dynamics *pp*, *legato*, *mp*, *mf*.
- Tempo II:** $\text{♩} = 62$, *rall*, *marcatissimo*. Includes dynamics *mp*, *sub*, *f*, *fff*, *p*.
- Tempo III subito:** $\text{♩} = 66$. Includes dynamics *ff*, *mf*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *sub*, *pp*.

Chords and annotations include: *Ab*, *A*, *Bm*, *C#*, *D_b*, *E*, *D7*, *Bm7*, *C_m*, *A*, *E_bm*, *G7*, *Edim*, *C7*.

Red: (013) / Orange: (014) / Yellow: (015) / Blue: (016) / Green: (027) / Light Blue Squares: Tonal chords / Red Triangle: 7th/9th chord

¹⁴² Ferneyhough, *Shadowtime*, 252.

zap... you
 place your bets between the gaps
 is it real... or is it... cropped?
 lock it in a box and frame it with a clock
 stop it or it'll crack you
 stuff it or it'll... sting you
 or does it mock?
 pop it... or get... sucked..up...in
 stop it
 sock you
 or tock you
 Like as as like as when...between...beside...along

knock knock... who's there...? don't ask don't tell who knows... the answer comes in
 the form of a question... an echo inside a shadow wrapped in cellophane... or so... the...
 story's...told...¹⁴⁵

The Liberace-like pianist acts as a shaman who transcends the spirit of the dead. Starting in mm.13, something different happens; a new staff is added and a P5 chord on the bass and P4 chords appear in the middle and bottom staff (see Example 10). Because the pianist is the shaman of Benjamin's avatar, here the ritual of transcendent begins; three staff line suggests the Holy Trinity. Nicolas Hodges comments, "I get the feeling that the whole second movement of this piece is a descent into hell for the performer. One feels more and more trapped as one goes through it."¹⁴⁶ The text does not seem to be the words of the pianist, rather, it seems that the pianist is speaking these words in a state of trance, as demonstrated in the repetition of 'as' and the rhymed but nonsensical words.

The shamanic ritual comes to cease at the end, but the pianist's mind is somewhere in a different place (see Example 11). The music also goes back to a regular grand staff. He talks to himself; "Knock knock... who's there...?" After the dramatic 12-minute of extremely virtuosic piano playing, the pianist makes this childlike joke. Has he lost his mind? Or is this Benjamin's voice speaking through this Liberace-like pianist's body? The ritual of transcendent now merged

¹⁴⁵ Text by Charles Bernstein, in Ferneyhough, *Opus Contra Naturam*, Movement II *Katabasis*.

¹⁴⁶ Tom Service, "Belt up and hold tight."

the two psyches, representing a merger of the high art and the low art. He is not the same person as the Liberace-like pianist in the first movement. The audience is no longer able to tell who he is.

EXAMPLE 11: Brian Ferneyhough *Opus Contra Naturam*, Movement II, mm.151-157¹⁴⁷

semplicemente, quasi improvvisando

knock knock... who's there...? don't ask don't tell who knows... the answer comes in the form of a question...

an echo inside a shadow wrapped in cellophane... or so... the... story's... told...

begin Part III after a general pause of not less than 5" but not more than 12"

Red: (013) / Orange: (014) / Yellow: (015) / Blue: (016) / Green: (027) / Light Blue Squares: Tonal chords / Red Triangle: 7th/9th chord

Ferneyhough presents Benjamin's thoughts (or an avatar) as shadows which now align with the corporeality of the pianist's body and the piano. He stated,

What is it about objects which makes them more than they seem to be at first? I've always very interested in shadows and the way shadows interact with the objects. It's like the

¹⁴⁷ Ferneyhough, *Shadowtime*, 270.

souls of the objects become shadows and they gradually align themselves with the object.¹⁴⁸

This last six measures present the combination of two psyche. Instead of interrupting one another, they seem to coexist. Before the final chord, the pianist plays the triple-piano tetrachord (0137), which contains all six interval classes (Forte 4-Z29). The final chord, which is a tritone, divides the octave in half, as if it suggests that Benjamin's spirit is now separated from the physical world (see Example 11).

After five to twelve seconds of silence, the third movement starts. As shown in the score (see Example 12), each word is supposed to align with the attack of the individual note. It is not indicated in the score; however, the voice is supposed to follow the dynamics of the piano part.¹⁴⁹ The pianist and the piano are now one entity descending to the underworld.

Two kinds of the materials are present in this movement: the text aligning with the pointillistic piano figures and, as Ferneyhough calls, a 'ridiculously banal' fanfare that is played on trumpet by devils welcoming Benjamin.¹⁵⁰ The fanfare-like figures are very short and fragmented and interrupt the declamation of the text, demonstrating a state of transcendent where the high art and the low art are mixed together.

Ferneyhough mentions that this movement is not a serious movement even though it sounds very serious. It is in fact a simple chromatic scale that is permutated to sound like a serial music. Ferneyhough reveals this truth little by little throughout this movement.¹⁵¹ Especially the final ascending line in mm.40 clearly shows individual 12 notes (Example 13).

¹⁴⁸ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

This whole piece tries to subvert its identity by breaking what has been established in the beginning of the piece. It starts with an intentionally academic text, which gets deconstructed in the second and third movement. The third movement tricks the audience to think of it as complex serious music, but it is revealed to be a simple chromatic scale that everyone is familiar with. By creating a world where the dualistic ideas (high/low good/evil, natural/artificial, eternity/moment, expression/structure) are mixed up and coincide, the piece dismantles the dualism itself. However, this whole piece is still built upon the understanding of the dualistic ideologies, which acknowledges the existence of binary oppositions. Instead of rejecting the idea of binary opposition, Ferneyhough acknowledges both the structuralist and post-structuralist understanding of the world, constantly fusing the binarism and non-binarism. Thus, the world Ferneyhough has created in this piece presents *phallogocentrism* and *l'écriture féminine* as one. By taking both sides, but not taking any side at the same time, Ferneyhough defines himself in multiple “slippery” positions.¹⁵⁴ This stance resembles to Jacques Derrida’s concept of double affirmation. Feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz discusses the importance of double affirmation in order for feminism to move forward. She writes,

[...] discourses influenced by or in some way involved in deconstruction are committed to both an affirmation, a saying-yes to patriarchy (the gesture of phallogocentrism), and an affirmation of feminism, the overcoming of patriarchy.¹⁵⁵

Ferneyhough affirms the binary opposition, then presents the world of non-binary on top of the dualistic ideology. By taking this slippery stance, he actually *does* practice the ideology of

¹⁵⁴ Feminist scholar Elizabeth Gross uses the word “slipperiness” to describe philosopher Jacques Derrida’s position in feminism. Derrida’s writing poses a non-feminist, but not anti-feminist position, which allows him to avoid defining himself in a singular definitive position, which ultimately moves feminism forward. See Elizabeth Grosz, “Ontology and Equivocation: Derrida’s Politics of Sexual Difference,” *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 114-124.

¹⁵⁵ Grosz, “Ontology and Equivocation,” 116-117.

l'écriture féminine. As philosopher Linda Alcoff suggests, he defines himself as “that which cannot be pinned down or subjugated within a dichotomous hierarchy.”¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

From these case studies, I have demonstrated how musical compositions can be understood as a form of *l'écriture féminine*. Both Kirsten's (*speak to me*) and Ferneyhough's *Opus Contra Naturam* manifest distinctively different qualities of *l'écriture féminine*. Kirsten achieves this through narratives of two women, evoking the imagery of the *Other*. Ferneyhough takes a slippery stance by acknowledging both *phallogocentrism* and *l'écriture féminine*. He merges them together to keep his position and his music undefinable in a conventional categorization. Both pieces carry transgressive qualities and challenge the historical aesthetic, the system of language, and hierarchical dichotomies that have been assigned by language. Feminist literary critic Trinh Minh-Ha writes,

Power, as unveiled by numerous contemporary writings, has always inscribed itself in language. Speaking, writing, and discoursing are not mere acts of communication; they are above all acts of compulsion.¹⁵⁷

Thus, performing the vocalizing pianist pieces is an act of compulsion.

In this chapter I have discussed the power of language and what language entails in the feminist discourse. *L'écriture féminine* empowers women's expression and strives to elude the hierarchical order inscribed by language. It introduces a new perspective and grants a new value to expressions that would have been dismissed as non-serious or non-academic if evaluated by traditional criteria. Furthermore, *l'écriture féminine* also creates opportunities to preserve one's

¹⁵⁶ Linda Alcoff, “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism,” 430-431.

¹⁵⁷ Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, 52.

quality, authenticity, and originality by denying the prescribed connotations that language carries.

The following chapter will focus on the other important aspect of the vocalizing pianist genre: the performer's body and voice.

CHAPTER 3. WOMEN'S VOICES AND BODIES

“In women’s speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which, once we’ve been permeated by it, profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it, retains the power of moving us—that element is the song: first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman.”
 — H  l  ne Cixous¹⁵⁸

What differs significantly in the vocalizing pianist genre from the conventional piano repertoire is the voice. The voice makes this genre very special and unique. I am not a singer or an actor; I am a pianist. By performing as a vocalizing pianist, I put myself in a vulnerable position because my untrained voice reveals more personal information about me. However, because of this vulnerability, I can invite the audience into an intimate space. The voice acts as a glue between my body and the an audience member’s body as it emerges from inside my body and is delivered to a listener’s ears.

In this chapter, I will investigate why the vocalizing pianist is a powerful medium and expression of a new aesthetic through the research of what the material voice does in relation to the body. I will also discuss the vulnerability the genre brings to the foreground due to the use of the pianist’s voice and how it can be used to create a powerful performance.

We Hear Bodies

The body can stand on its own, but the voice cannot; hearing the voice implies that one anticipates the origin of the voice, and the presence of the body. Musicologist Bonnie Gordon claims that without the discourse of the body, one cannot explore the aspect of the voice as “an embodied phenomenon.”¹⁵⁹ She writes,

¹⁵⁸ Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 881.

¹⁵⁹ Bonnie Gordon, “Tori Amos’s Inner Voices,” in *Women’s Voices across Musical Worlds*, ed. Jane A. Bernstein (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 189.

Voice emerges from inside the body through the throat, mouth, and diaphragm, serving as a bridge to invisible and metaphysical realms that define subjectivity. [...] the singing voice engenders a heightened state of corporeality and thus renders song different from and excessive over speech. Because it is so fundamentally of the body, the reception of sung performances is always inflected by constructions of gender and of the body.¹⁶⁰

Semiotician and philosopher Roland Barthes also notes the close connection between the voice and body in musical performance. By witnessing a live performance, he *hears* the performer's body; in other words, he hears the music that comes from the performer's inner body.¹⁶¹ Jake Dame exemplifies the concept of 'hearing the body' using an example of castrati. Although a castrato may sing the same register as a soprano or alto, the audience does not confuse him with a female singer; they still perceive the corporeality of the male body.¹⁶² This leads me to ask the question, is it really the voice that makes one hear the body? In my own experience, I have mistaken the voice of a countertenor for a female voice when I heard him on radio. Does this mean the visual information of the performer creates the gendered impression of the voice?

This phenomenon is explained in Nina Eidsheim's dissertation through the theory of 'performative listening.' Through the investigation of timbre, she defines that the timbre is abstraction, which does not exist as an object; rather it is perceived when framed by the listener's subjective experience. Building upon this concept, she connects with the 'choreographed lessons' encouraged by Rameau and states;

The listening body was asked to follow instructions on positioning in relation to the instrument, while simultaneously the listening mind was asked to listen for what it did not believe existed. The power of performance, of directed bodies, of the positioning of the body and the mind offering access to previously unknown registers of experience

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ This remark comes out from him criticizing the CD technology that flattens the musical performance. He claims that his music criticism would be based on 'the image of the body (the figure)' that is given to him. See Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image Music Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 179-189.

¹⁶² Jake Dame, "Unveiled Voices : Sexual Difference and the Castrato," in *Queering the Pitch The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, eds. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 139-154.

enabled people to begin to hearing what they had never heard before. What we hear is not necessarily about the *sound*; rather, it is about what *we believe to be sounded*.¹⁶³

This research suggests that one cannot identify the sound source based solely on auditory perception. With the supplement of visual information, the sound is interpreted “in and by the performative state of the listener.”¹⁶⁴ In this sense, the physical presence of the performer (or the instrument) informs a listener’s understanding of the sound. The association, based on the listener’s experience, is repeatedly retrieved when the listener hears the same sound. For example, a listener who has never heard the sound of a rainstick might perceive the sound as actual rain because the association of the sound is strongly linked to real rain based on previous experiences. However, once the listener witnesses a rainstick producing the sound, a new understanding and association with the sound is created in the listener’s mind. Thus, one’s interpretation of any sound is informed by experience and repetitive retrieval of one’s memory, which is performative and subject to incremental change.

Similarly, performance scholar Pamela Hendricks suggests that one would not be able to perceive someone’s gender through vocality. She writes, “[o]nly when voice and gesture are combined and repeated in more detailed patterns do they result in an impression of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine.’”¹⁶⁵ This research suggests that the act of listening is not a mere passive act, instead, with the aid of visual framing, the listener actively identifies the sound source upon hearing it.

If visual framing is needed in order to ‘hear the body,’ why did I think that the countertenor’s voice was a female voice? What body did I hear? This situation is described in

¹⁶³ Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Voice as a Technology of Selfhood: Towards an Analysis of Racialized Timbre and Vocal Performance" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2008), ProQuest (3306458), 170, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/304655431?accountid=26417>.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 167-171.

¹⁶⁵ Hendricks, “Two Opposite Animals?,” 115.

Alec Norkey's thesis which investigates the queer (non-normative) vocality of *ryouseirui* (androgyny) singers in cyber-space. Singers who can sing songs with both male and female voice are popular and called *ryouseirui* on the Japanese popular video website Nico Nico.¹⁶⁶ They do not reveal their sex; they do not show their faces or bodies in the music video. Either singing as male or female, Norkey still hears the certain (gendered) body without visual information.¹⁶⁷ He explains his experience citing Jarman-Ivan's queer voice theory; the material voice itself is "ungendered" and performative, but as listeners, we bring gendered association to the voice.¹⁶⁸ From this perspective, it makes sense why I mislabeled the countertenor's voice as 'female.' The material voice itself was ungendered, but as the listener, I made the gendered association based on my experience and understanding of the female voice.

It is important to note that an audience member's gender-related impressions are always based on gender ideologies and normative conceptions that have been constructed within culture and based on the individual's experience.¹⁶⁹ Depending on the cultural context wherein the performance takes place, the reception differs significantly because the cultural inscription that the performer's body carries is enacted by the audience.

Suzanne Cusick points out an interesting aspect of performative voice, revealing how individuals *perform* voices in order to meet cultural expectations. She shows how unnatural our voices already are by using the example of the difference between boys and girls and how they deal with voice change during puberty. A boy, although he could retain the pre-pubertal singing range if he re-learned the appropriate vocal technique, would more likely be eager to abandon his

¹⁶⁶ Nico Nico, *Nico Nico website*, <http://www.nicovideo.jp> (accessed April 4, 2017).

¹⁶⁷ Alec Norkey, "Intersectional Androgyny in Cyberspace: Gender, Commercialization, and Vocality in Female Ryouseiruis' Music Videos" (Master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2016), http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=bgsu1462552660.

¹⁶⁸ Freya Jarman-Ivens, *Queer voices: technologies, vocalities, and the musical flaw* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), cited in Norkey, "Intersectional Androgyny," 8-9.

¹⁶⁹ Cusick, "On Musical Performances," 38.

original register so that he could perform his masculine identity. On the other hand, girls are taught that their voices do not change. This belief lets girls continue to use the same vocalizations despite the growth of their bodily structure, which might have affected their vocality. The cultural belief system promotes boys to abandon their high register voices and to perform their biological sex, while girls “perform both biological sex and their gender as the absence of ‘change.’”¹⁷⁰ Both Cusick and Jarman-Ivens recognize the performative nature of the voice while noting the voice’s close connection to the bodily corporeality.¹⁷¹ Jarman-Ivens writes,

Thus, the body-voice relationship is a looped one, a matrix in which body and voice each produce the other. [...] the voice has an inescapably bodily nature both in its production and its reception.¹⁷²

Because the material voice is ungendered and performative, it might act as an agent to dispel and rewrite gender ideologies and stereotypes that have been inscribed on the body.¹⁷³

Scandalous Voice

The subversive potential of the voice against the system of language has been recognized in the research of speech. Shoshana Felman states that when language is vocalized through a human body, it creates a ‘scandalous’ speech act. It is scandalous because the participation of the body reveals something more than what is revealed intentionally through language.¹⁷⁴ Judith Butler also writes, “the speech act says more, or says differently, than it means to say.”¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 32-33.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.; Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*.

¹⁷² Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 8, quoted in Norkey “Intersectional Androgyny,” 54.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 12, quoted in Norkey “Intersectional Androgyny,” 54.

¹⁷⁴ Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 65, quoted in Michelle Duncan, “The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16 no.3 (2004), 292.

¹⁷⁵ Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 10, quoted in Duncan “The Operatic Scandal,” 292.

scandalous nature implies the possibility of dismantling *phallogocentrism* through language through the participation of the body and voice.

In speech, because the intelligibility foregrounds the purpose, the power of the voice is hindered as a mere vehicle of language.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, musical speech (or musical narrative) functions as more than a communication tool because the voice subverts its assigned role as a carrier of language.¹⁷⁷ Carolyn Abbate explains the subversive nature of the singing voice using the vocal ‘melisma’ as an example; “[the melismatic vocalises] by splitting words [...] and separating syllable from syllable, destroy language. [...] by killing language, also kills plot, and herself as a character.”¹⁷⁸ Abbate explains that such non-lexical singing portrays the performer not as a character, but as “an irrational nonbeing.”¹⁷⁹ In her point of view, a musical narrative conveyed through the text should be understood metaphorically because the musical text can contain richer meanings beyond the literal meaning of the text. In this sense, the musical voice can be understood as even more scandalous than a speech act.

In an interview with Adam Marks, Frederic Rzewski discusses why he does not think of *De Profundis* as a theater piece. He articulates the difference in the perception of time in these two mediums; five seconds of music can contain much more information than the same five seconds of a play.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the musical text can function beyond what language itself tries to mean, regardless of the type of text settings the composer chooses. When the voice makes

¹⁷⁶ According to Lacanian conception of Logocentrism (See Ch 2); See also Annette Schlichter, “Do Voices Matter? Vocality, Materiality, Gender Performativity,” *Body & Society* 17, no. 1 (2001): 31-52; Duncan, “The Operatic Scandal”; Abbate, *Unsung Voices*; Cusick, “On Musical Performances”; Elizabeth Tolbert, “Untying The Music/Language Knot,” in *Music, Sensation, and Sensuality*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern (New York: Routledge, 2002), 77-96.

¹⁷⁷ Schlichter notes various scholarly writing about the voice. See Schlichter, “Do Voices Matter?,” 31-52; Johan Sundberg, *The Science of the Singing Voice* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1987); Mladen Doler, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Duncan, “The Operatic Scandal,” 283-306.

¹⁷⁸ Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 11.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Frederic Rzewski, interview by Adam Marks, in Marks, “The Virtuositic Era,” 184.

sounds in musical performance, whether spoken or sung, and whether intelligible or not, the performer can exist outside of the system of language, freeing the voice from its subordinate role as a conveyer of language.

Combined with the idea of an ungendered material voice, this subversive quality of the musical voice could provide an opportunity to *rewrite* what has been already inscribed on the female body. In fact, many female artists and musicians have attempted to re-write the body through bodily and vocal performances.

The Personal is Political - Process of Rewriting the Body

The concept “the personal is political”¹⁸¹ promoted women performers in the 1970s and 1980s to explore the meanings of their feminine body, gender, and sexuality under patriarchy. Because *Woman*’s sexuality has been understood only “in relation to male desire,” her sexuality “cannot remain private.”¹⁸² By sharing their personal experiences rooted in their sexuality, female performance artists interrogated the cultural construction of *Woman* as a fabrication and attempted to re-write the concept of the female body.¹⁸³

It was a natural direction for performance artists such as Carol Schneeman, Karin Finley, and Marina Abramovic to explore their gender and sex because *Woman*, who has been imagined as the *Other*, “cannot help but foreground gender critically” in her performance.¹⁸⁴ These artists attempted to subvert patriarchal aesthetic which preferred logic, rationality, and distance, all of which are attributes of *phallogocentrism*. Thus, expressing their ‘personal’ view of the world and

¹⁸¹ “the metaphor most central to feminism.” See Forte, “Women’s Performance Art,” 219.

¹⁸² Ibid., 225.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 223.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 224.

their life in an art form itself was a statement of their disobedience to the patriarchal system.¹⁸⁵ By exposing their bodies (often in full nudity) they liberated themselves from the female body's contamination of cultural inscription, and by performing with the body, they figuratively turned their 'domestic' and 'private' spheres into a performance space that empowered them.

Performance scholar Jeanie Forte writes, -

[...] through women's performance art, the body speaks both as a sign and as an intervention into language; and it is further possible for the female body to be used in such a way as to foreground the tenderization of culture and the repressive system of representation.¹⁸⁶

These female performers do not act; she performs who she is, conveying her own psyche. The sincerity of 'not-acted' performance intensifies the sense of reality when sharing personal experiences. Similarly, the vocalizing pianist performance requires neither acting skills nor virtuosic vocal techniques.¹⁸⁷ In fact, putting on an actor's or singer's shoes as a pianist makes the performer humble and vulnerable, which is itself a dismantling factor to the pre-established aesthetic under patriarchy. Performance art is not about 'doing something well', but about questioning those standards.¹⁸⁸ Aligning with the aesthetic of performance art, the vocalizing pianist genre also questions and re-examines the standards of historical performance practice.

The performance of the body is further strengthened when joined by the voice. Scholar Bonnie Gordon argues the subversive potential of the female voice using the example of singer Tori Amos's performance of *Me and a Gun*. *Me and a Gun* tells Amos's personal story as a rape survivor:

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 223.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 227.

¹⁸⁷ Frederic Rzewski, interview by Adam Marks, in Marks, "The Virtuoso Era," 176-186; Amy Beth Kirsten, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, October 2016); Stuart Saunders Smith interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, August 2016).

¹⁸⁸ Burnham, "Performance Art, High Performance and Me," 36, quoted in Forte, "Women's Performance Art," 233.

[...] the potential of the singing voice to envoice and thus reveal realms of human experience and subjectivity that usually remain beyond the limits of sensibility. The voice can move along such an axis because it emerges from the physical body, serving as a vehicle for self-expression, identity formation, and interaction with others. It also points inwards to realms that cannot be expressed by language and thus cannot be explicitly communicated, making knowable experiences and sensations that otherwise remain completely elusive. The voice is at once material—of the body in the form of air and breath—and immaterial in that it is not something we can touch.¹⁸⁹

Gordon points out that Amos intentionally calls attention to her ‘erotic body’ with a clear political agenda, through which she claims power and authority over the situation. In this manipulation of the relationship between the female performer and the audience, Amos subverts the historical framing of female performer as a sexual object.¹⁹⁰

Another interesting aspect Gordon articulates in Amos’s vocal performance is that Amos seems to communicate her inner ‘pain’ through her voice. Her song *Me and a Gun* proceeds only with factual storytelling without stating her emotional state, which makes her audience ‘silent witnesses.’¹⁹¹ Because the voice is produced from inside the body and delivered to the outside as vibration, Gordon believes that the voice (or song) is a medium that can articulate an otherwise “unshareable experience of pain.” Gordon writes,

Pain, because it is such an interior experience, defies language and in its most extreme cases destroys the sufferer’s ability to string together coherent words. Amos projects outward cries and groans—the moment where pain destroys language—within a sung gesture that begins to enable her own very private experience of pain to enter the very public domain of the concert stage. Her solo singing voice acts as an interpreter for pain most obviously when moments of pure sonic force emanate from her body, when we hear her body, her breathing, her sighing, her moaning, and her “noise.”¹⁹²

Gordon claims the voice’s agency as a deliverer of inner pain; the voice has the ability to transcend the corporeality and to transform the invisible into a tangible experience.

¹⁸⁹ Gordon, “Tori Amos’s Inner Voices,” 188.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 187-205.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 197-198.

¹⁹² Ibid., 199.

The personal narratives performed by the body and the voice make powerful statements. Building upon this idea, I will now examine selected compositions that communicate either the composer's personal experience or the pain of the character. When interpreting and performing these compositions as personal moments that share inner pain, the performer's role is to convey the message as sincerely and genuinely as possible, not to 'act.' When the performer tries to re-tell a story as the 'self,' the vocalizing pianist genre can be seen not as a theatrical act, but as a political act—the continuation of the idea that “the personal is political.” Such performances can potentially influence and change connotations of the body, culturally constructed stereotypes, and biases.

Case Study #3: Stuart Saunders Smith *Lazarus* Movement III

Smith's work is often considered “confessional” due to the use of his own confessional poetry.¹⁹³ The third movement shares a strikingly personal memory which reveals his severe depression and the story of his friend Jim who tried to commit suicide. The text reads as follows:

It was the winter of 2013 that I got sick and had to go to the hospital.
 I had a psychotic break.
 There was a medicine adjustment that needed to be made.
 My roommate, Jim, had tried to commit suicide by going into the winter woods of new hampshire to sleep his life away by freezing to death.
 He was found by hikers.
 His foot had advanced frostbite, his heart was damaged and his kidneys had shut down.
 He was better when I met him.
 Jim was a bank robber.
 He went to the bank with a bag.
 He told the teller to fill the bag or else.
 He did this in the morning.
 Jim felt remorse.
 He called the police in the afternoon and turned himself in.

¹⁹³ Matthew Timman, "The Drum Set Works of Stuart Saunders Smith as a Correlative Trilogy through Compositional Unity and Autobiographical Content as Confession" (Master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2014), http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=bgsu1400161867.

Jim was sent to the county jail for 8 weeks.
 When he got out he went to the same bank, to the same teller, and did the same thing.
 He turned himself in again, too.
 This time Jim was sent to the state prison for two years.
 Now at the hospital he was locked up again, unable to walk, unable to think through his
 depression.
 Jim told the staff he would not kill himself in the hospital.
 He said, "I don't want to make anyone look bad. I'll kill myself when I get out."
 I left Jim.
 I went home.
 Maybe someday Jim will go home, too.¹⁹⁴

This movement starts with his confession that he has been suffering from depression. His
 confession ends within three sentences and he starts to tell a story about his roommate Jim.
 While Jim's story is told, Smith as "I" does not appear until the third from the last sentence. "I"
 as the storyteller leaves the audience with one piece of information; "I" had a psychotic break
 and had to be in the hospital. "I" tells the story of the Jim's pain, but not the pain of "I" himself.
 Through the striking story of Jim's suffering, Smith seems to liberate his own suffering. As in
 Tori Amos's "Me and a Gun," "I" never states his feelings, his pain, or Jim's.

The whole text is followed by a 16 measure-'lament' (see Example 14). The circled notes
 are the ones that the performer sings with "Ah" while playing them on the piano. The climactic
 moment happens when it goes up to the E-flat5, which is the highest sung pitch in the whole
 piece. The D5 after the E-flat is not circled, which almost creates an effect of 'choked' or
 abruptly 'silenced' voice.¹⁹⁵ The last singing voice B-flat3 creates a 'sigh' with uneasiness
 because the voice sounds unstable because of the presence of A5 on top, contrasting to the
 consonant harmonies in this movement.

The story is to be recited while the piano occasionally punctuates the words. The sparse
 and quiet music underneath the text enhances the power of the voice. Almost it seems that the

¹⁹⁴ Text of *Lazarus* Movement III, written by Stuart Saunders Smith himself.

¹⁹⁵ Later, Smith mentioned that this was an editorial mistake. He intended the D to be sung; however, I prefer not to sing the D because I felt a profound emotional connection with my interpretation.

first two movements are the preparation for this final movement and they function as a consolation or lullaby to comfort the pain that both Smith and Jim went through.

EXAMPLE 14: Stuart Saunders Smith *Lazarus*, Movement III, Page 6¹⁹⁶

On the contrary to the simple- and plain-sounding melodies, the rhythm is precisely notated with multi-layered tuplets. He states the reason for his use of irregular polyrhythms in an interview with percussionist Matthew Timman,

The human body is an extraordinarily complex polyrhythmic system. You have the heart beating a certain speeds at certain times, the stomach does the same, all of the other organs have their own rhythms. So, polyrhythms are natural and metered rhythms are not natural.¹⁹⁷

Sincerity and honesty that characterize Smith's compositions are the results of his sincere attitude towards his 'self.' Smith mentions, "Music must be honest. The story really happened. Good music is, at its core, real."¹⁹⁸ Smith puts himself in a vulnerable position by sharing his personal and real story. When the performer enacts the story with the voice and body, it creates an intimate and sincere performance.

¹⁹⁶ Stuart Saunders Smith, *Lazarus* (unpublished handwritten manuscript), 6. Copyright Sonic Art Editions. Used by permission of Smith Publications, 54 Lent Road, Sharon, VT 05065.

¹⁹⁷ Stuart Saunders Smith, interview by Matthew Timman, in Timman, "The Drum Set Works of Stuart Saunders Smith," 4.

¹⁹⁸ Stuart Saunders Smith, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, August 2016).

Case Study #4: Brian Ferneyhough *Opus Contra Naturam* III. *Kataplexy*

In the previous chapter, I have discussed *Opus Contra Naturam* and its subversive quality, applying the concept of *l'écriture féminine*. Ferneyhough stated in my interview that *Opus Contra Naturam* was 'personal' piece not to him but because of the instrumentation: a single person talking to the piano. The third movement *Kataplexy* can be also interpreted as a personal sharing of the pain if one relates the piece to Ferneyhough's illness with narcolepsy. Cataplexy is a medical condition that describes sudden loss of muscle control, which happens for those who have narcolepsy, a neurological disorder. Ferneyhough was diagnosed as narcolepsy with cataplexy in 1993.¹⁹⁹ According to the American Sleep Association's website,

Cataplectic attacks vary in severity from slight momentary drooping of the eyelids, to quite severe with the inability to stand. Most commonly, persons with narcolepsy experience mild cataplectic attacks, where arm or leg muscles become weak, speech is slurred or their head droops. Even in the most severe attacks, sufferers remain fully conscious, entirely aware of what is occurring, and what is happening around them. These attacks can occur randomly, but most often are brought on by any strong emotions.²⁰⁰

What happens in the cataplectic attack resembles what happens in this movement. The highly contrapuntal piano line seems to imitate the heightened sensitivity of the brain activity during a cataplectic attack. Words spark with the piano but they fail to make sense. This movement abruptly ends with the fanfare like figure with triple forte as if it suggests the last bit of consciousness dissolves into the shadow. This third movement represents the philosophy of Benjamin literally gets deconstructed into a collection of words that do not make sense. Paralleling with the dissolution of Benjamin's avatar from the physical world, cataplectic attack is depicted through the serialization of the text.

¹⁹⁹ Lois Fitch, *Brian Ferneyhough* (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 2013), 20.

²⁰⁰ The American Sleep Association, "About Narcolepsy / Cataplexy," last accessed February 4, 2017, <https://www.sleepassociation.org/patients-general-public/narcolepsycataplexy/about-narcolepsy-cataplexy/>

This piece seems to not only support the narrative of the scene, but also parallels with the real struggle that Ferneyhough experiences. It is interesting to note that the solo version published before the opera include neither the title *Kataplexy* nor the text. The text was later added only 12 days before the first premiere of the opera.²⁰¹ This suggests that the interpretation would have been completely different without the text. With the presence of the voice and the nonsensical text, the piece communicates the story of both Ferneyhough's and Benjamin's struggle and pain.

Case Study #5: Amy Beth Kirsten (*Speak to Me*)

Looking back to Amy Beth Kirsten's (*Speak to Me*), the piece also communicates pain, and in particular, the nymph Echo's pain. On the contrary to the other two pieces, Kirsten communicates the pain by the silenced body, and not through the voice. After the first two movements, in which a dramatic story is told through the pianist's voice, the third movement *speaks* the pain only with the silenced body. The vulnerability of the performer is heightened in this movement; because she *cannot* speak, she has to reveal the body that has lost the power of the voice. By creating a movement that does not use vocalization, Kirsten effectively brings awareness to the performer's body, through which the audience can empathize with Echo's pain.²⁰²

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the power of the voice and body in musical performance:

(1) Auditory perception is not accurate enough to recognize gender, but each individual brings a

²⁰¹ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

²⁰² See Chapter 2 for more detailed analysis of the piece.

unique association of gender to the voice; (2) The musical voice has a dismantling quality against the system of language; and (3) Vulnerability brought by the voice can create a powerful performance. Such vulnerable performances are potentially capable of dispelling stereotypes and biases that have been inscribed on the body.

There are countless ways to tell a story. These examples show inner pain in a variety of ways: Smith shares pain through the story of his friend, Jim; Ferneyhough portrays his cataplectic attack; and Kirsten depicts Echo's pain through the silenced body. Each depiction puts the performer in a vulnerable space. A performance which foregrounds vulnerability brings the audience closer, allowing them to empathize with the pain.

Art song tradition has championed such vulnerable, intimate expression. As pianist Robert Spillmann states, "one singer and one pianist, facing an audience and armed with nothing but text, music, and personality."²⁰³ The vocalizing pianist genre builds upon the tradition now with one pianist and a non-theatrical, untrained voice. This interpretation of the genre—with a focus on vulnerability and intimacy—offers a powerful aesthetic expression in a solo piano repertoire, which not only expands the notion of a pianist, but also enriches the expressive range of the performer.

Cixous writes, "... with such force in their fragility; a fragility, a vulnerability, equal to their incomparable intensity."²⁰⁴ As a continuation of 'the personal is political,' when one understands the power of vulnerability, the vocalizing pianist genre can create a meaningful performance that empowers women's voices and bodies.

²⁰³ Spillmann, "Performing Lieder: The Mysterious Mix," 406.

²⁰⁴ Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 886.

CHAPTER 4. GENDERED SPACE - A REFLECTION ON PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

“Truth is like the moon in the sky. Words are like a finger. A finger can point to the moon. To see the moon, you must look past the finger. To look for the truth in books, [...] is like mistaking the finger for the moon. The moon and the finger are not the same thing.”

— Sixth Patriarch of Zen, from an old Zen koan²⁰⁵

Embodying a Bizarre Drama

Roland Barthes writes, “it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality, [...] to reach that point where only language acts, ‘performs,’ and not ‘me.’”²⁰⁶ Barthes claims the performativity of language, for the *Author* no longer holds authority over his/her text because the text *needs* the reader to enact it. With the death of the *Author*, the text offers ‘a multi-dimensional space’ for the readers to interpret the text, instead of ‘a single theological meaning,’ which was often thought to be true in classic literary criticism. In this understanding of the text, the subjectivity of the *Author* disappears and the text stands on its own with the autonomy of language’s representational system. For the reader, “every text is eternally written *here and now*.”²⁰⁷ Thus, the old notion of *Author*, the creator and the genius, is now unveiled to be confined to the reader; “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the *Author*.”²⁰⁸ With his famous literary criticism, *The Death of the Author*, Barthes throws out the authorial figure of *Author*, the creator and the genius, by reversing the author-reader relationship. The performative aspect of the text thus empowers the reader; the text is now freed from the *Author*’s subjectivity and open for more possible interpretations.

When this concept is applied to music and musical performance, it appears to be ‘bizarre.’ The *Author* is of course the composer, but is the *reader* the performer, or the audience?

²⁰⁵ Ruth L. Ozeki, “Appendix E: Schrödinger’s Cat,” in *A tale for the time being: a novel* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013).

²⁰⁶ Barthes, “Death of the Author,” 143.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

In music, if the audience is the *reader*, the author-reader relationship is *mediated* by the performer. Thus, two-levels of the author-reader relationships occur; one during the process of learning/interpreting between the composer and the performer, the other during the performance between the performer and the audience. The music is enacted by the performer, which is enacted again by the audience. The mediation by the performer positions music as a special kind of art, which significantly differs from reading books of poetry and novels. Barthes claims, “*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production.*”²⁰⁹ Similarly, music is experienced only when performed by the performer. Carolyn Abbate calls this strange author-reader relationship of music, “a bizarre drama,” because the performer is claiming the authorship of the music through the performance but the audience is still aware of the presence of the composer as the *Author*.²¹⁰

In this bizarre drama, the performer acts as both the reader and the author. The performer interprets the text (music) by the composer and writes (performs) as the author. During the musical performance, the death of the performer as the *Author* occurs simultaneously with the birth of the audience as the *Author*. While the written composition is a completed artifact, the performer’s and the audience’s authorship always occur “here and now.”²¹¹ As the text opens itself up to multiple interpretations, the interpretation of music and musical performance creates a complex web of performative interpretation, which constantly changes based on time, location, and each individual’s experience. This bizarre drama happens during any kind of musical performance; however, genres which utilize the voice and text seem to require greater responsibility from the performer.

²⁰⁹ Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in *Image-Music-Text*, 157.

²¹⁰ Abbate, “Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women,” in *Musicology and Difference: gender and sexuality in music scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 234-236.

²¹¹ Barthes “Death of the Author,” 145.

As discussed in Chapter 3, when combined with the presence of the body, the musical voice can convey more information than what language itself attempts to accomplish. In opera, art song, and musical theater, singers are constantly dealing with the balance between their own identities and the identities portrayed in the text (*personae*). It is especially difficult to transcend the gap when their identities do not match with the characters' identities, as Singer Richard Sjoerdsma explains the difficulty of “transcend[ing] a gender gap” in singing art songs.²¹² For example, he expresses the difficulty of singing *Gretchen am Sprinrade* effectively as a male singer. Each voice and text has a particular ‘*persona*’ which affects the reception of performance. Because “the tenor or baritone voice is not merely that of a soprano or a mezzo an octave lower, or vice versa,” the vocal quality and the *persona* of the poem (the subject ‘I’) “have a profound impact upon repertoire.”²¹³ In the instances of the countertenor and male falsetto voice, he acknowledges the issue of the visual presence in a live concert setting. Sjoerdsma makes the critical comment that just “because it is possible to sing a certain piece, it is not necessarily appropriate.”²¹⁴ Nevertheless, in the end, singers do have to choose what works for them, using their own understanding and interpretation of the text.²¹⁵ Their decision might not exactly align with the composer’s intentions or satisfy the audience’s expectations. However, I believe, if they succeed in making it work for their particular voice and their physical presence, it is possible to overcome the gender gap. Such performances can even open up new interpretations that might question the historical understanding of a piece. Similarly, in music’s double-authorial condition, the vocalizing pianist has to take initiative to make decisions based on what works for her. Lisa Moore did so by performing *De Profundis* even though she was told by the composer that it has

²¹² Sjoerdsma, “Gender Specific,” 407.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 406-407.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 407.

²¹⁵ Spillmann, “Performing Lieder,” 409-410; Hendrick, “Two Opposite Animals?” 122.

to be played by a homosexual male.²¹⁶ The vocalizing pianist must be brave enough to take initiative and fulfill the greater responsibility of the *Author*.

Because, as Cusick states, the intelligibility of gendered performance depends on the mutual understanding of gender,²¹⁷ the performance of this genre always coincides with the risk of perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing normative conceptions. However, if the performer makes the decision to *question* those culturally constructed ideologies through her performance, the genre can become a powerful tool to combat gender stereotypes and negative connotations associated with the female body. Even if it is subtle, being aware of those culturally constructed ideologies changes the way one performs. Furthermore, it might provoke the audience into questioning their own gender ideologies, and if the performer takes initiative to work closely with a composer, it might stimulate the composer to begin thinking about the gendered aspect of musical performance. Society is made of feedback loops; even a small influence on one person can gradually make a positive impact on society as a whole.

Looking at musical performance through Barthes' notion of the *Author*, one can recognize the greater responsibility of the performer as the *Author*. Once a composition is completed, regardless of the gender or identity of the character, the piece can be freely enacted (performed) by a performer of any gender, ethnicity, nationality, or age. Instead of striving for a 'correct' interpretation, Barthes' concept allows multiplicity of interpretations and empowers the performer to be a game changer. Taking the position of the *Author*, I will now discuss my interpretative process of the selected compositions referring to feminist theories. I hope to demonstrate that musical compositions can be interpreted differently when focusing on centrality of gender in musical performance.

²¹⁶ Lisa Moore, interview by Adam Marks, in Marks, "The Virtuositic Era," 139.

²¹⁷ Cusick, "On Musical Performances."

Case Study #6: Brian Ferneyhough *Opus Contra Naturam* Movement I

In Chapter 2, I have interpreted *Opus Contra Naturam* as a piece that demonstrates the quality of *l'écriture féminine*: (1) The whole piece tries to subvert its identity; (2) The intentionally academic text in the first movement gets deconstructed in the second and third movements; (3) The third movement tricks the audience to think of it as a complex serious music, but it is revealed to be a simple chromatic scale; and (4) Ferneyhough builds the non-binary world upon the acknowledged dualism. By positioning himself in a 'slippery' stance, he dismantles the dualism and dichotomous hierarchy. In Chapter 3, I have used the example of the third movement to show how the movement shares his personal struggle paralleling with Walter Benjamin's pain.

In this case study, I will discuss my interpretive process on the first movement where the pianist speaks the "incredibly academic" text. The first movement begins with the scene that a pianist in a Liberace-like costume appears in a underground piano bar of Las Vegas. The Liberace-like pianist is as an avatar of philosopher Walter Benjamin, sitting drunk at the piano and passing time by asking philosophical questions to the piano. The piano quietly listens to his absurd questions and answers. The text of the first movement was written by Ferneyhough himself.

Are the shadows of objects on cave walls themselves objects?
 Un decidable.
 Do images read minds?
 Semantic insufficiency.
 Then as when, now as some what or other.
 Corrupted data.
 What's the cube root of a counterfactual?
 An almond.
 Palimpsestic forms,
 Cracked spines,
 Archives of anteriority,
 Vampiric codes,

Bell, book and candle.
Henceforth unavailable.²¹⁸

I worked on this piece before I met Ferneyhough in the summer of 2016 at the Darmstadt Summer Course for New Music. Because I initially interpreted this text as a male voice, based on the fact the pianist is supposed to wear a Liberace-like costume, I tried to speak with a low, inflectionless voice which was my imagination of the voice of philosophers. I also sought an emotional connection with the text by bringing sadness and emptiness which Benjamin might have felt when he killed himself. However, I was unable to feel completely comfortable with the text as a non-native speaker who has never spoken terms like ‘counterfactual’ or ‘palimpsestic forms.’ In fact, my interview with Ferneyhough proved that the uncomfortableness and artificialness were necessary elements in this movement. Ferneyhough spoke that his aim for the first movement was to make the text sound “incredibly academic.”²¹⁹ For the opera performance, he coached pianist Nicolas Hodges to speak like an Oxford Professor. This strange situation where the Liberace-like pianist speaks of Benjamin’s “incredibly academic” thoughts creates an intentionally artificial and uncomfortable environment.

Although Ferneyhough wrote this piece to be performed by a male pianist (it was dedicated to Ian Pace), he acknowledges that the content itself does not have specific gender.²²⁰ It aligns with Barthes’s theory of *the Death of the Author*; once the text is produced, it can be enacted by anyone of any gender. Because his purpose of this piece is to comment on Benjamin and his philosophy, ‘Natural as opposed to Artificial,’ he mentioned that as long as the pianist shows the artificialness with the costume such as a female pierrot costume, the point will come

²¹⁸ Text of *Opus Contra Naturam*, the first movement, written by Ferneyhough, in *Shadowtime*, 249-251.

²¹⁹ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

²²⁰ Ibid.

across with a female pianist. When a female pianist performs, he suggests to speak in a way that a female Oxford professor would speak rather than her imitating a male voice.²²¹

The problem is, in a musical performance, the enactment of text (music) is witnessed by the audience. Ferneyhough wrote this text taking the philosophy of Walter Benjamin. As the pianist is an avatar of Benjamin, Ferneyhough himself was also the shaman of Benjamin, bringing Benjamin's 'dead' language to life. Ferneyhough as the *Author* dies as soon as he writes. As soon as I as the shaman enact these language through my musical performance, I die as the *Author*. Yet, the audience as the reader enacts my performance through my voice and body. *I leave my body there while dying*. Thus, my performance manifests something extra, revealing unnaturalness of the text, the body, and the voice. If I interpret the 'incredibly academic' text as *patrius sermo*,²²² my performance evokes an imagery; *patrius sermo* is now spoken through the body of *Woman* who has been excluded from it. After knowing this text was intentionally written to sound 'incredibly academic,' I sought the way to understand my performance with my female body as a masquerade of the masculinity, borrowing the Butlerian concept of drag performance.

Joan Riviere discusses in her "Womanliness as a Masquerade" that the notion of 'womanliness' is a mask that a woman wears to hide the masculinity that she possesses. This gender performance is done through conscious display of stereotypical femininity constructed in the society where one resides. She writes,

Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not the stolen goods. The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade.' My suggestion is not,

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² See Chapter 2; see also Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land*.

however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.²²³

Besides the academic tone of the text, Ferneyhough also visually creates a Jesus analogy in this movement. The pianist has to perform high and low extreme registers on piano, which makes the pianist's body stretched out to create the imagery of Crucifixion. It reinforces the imagery of the pianist as a shamanic figure, which correspond to Jesus as a shaman.²²⁴

EXAMPLE 15: Brian Ferneyhough *Opus Contra Naturam*, Movement I, mm.1-3²²⁵
R.H. in the highest and L.H. in the lowest registers.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Brian Ferneyhough's *Opus Contra Naturam*, Movement I, measures 1-3. The first system (measures 1-3) features the right hand in the highest register (6th line) and the left hand in the lowest register (8th line). The notation is highly complex, with numerous slurs, ties, and dynamic markings including *pppp*, *appna udibile*, and *ppp*. The second system (measures 4-6) continues this complexity, with dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, *mp*, and *ppp*. A tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 70.5$ and a *subito* instruction are present. The score is characterized by extreme register contrast and intricate rhythmic patterns.

Another interesting aspect is that this piece does not employ singing; all the text is only to be recited. The text is written in a box above the staff when the pianist is holding longer note values. The text is not rhythmically notated, which emphasizes the text as language (or an intelligible speech). The treatment of the text here also suggests the use of a male-centric approach because language is thought to be a male entity (*phallogocentrism*), contrasting to the

²²³ Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 10 (1929): 306.

²²⁴ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

²²⁵ Ferneyhough, *Shadowtime*, 249.

female entity of the musical voice.²²⁶ Ferneyhough also stated in my interview that his inspiration for this piece was Schoenberg's opera, *Moses und Aron* in which Moses never sings.²²⁷ By embodying these stereotypical masculinity with my female body, it masquerades unnatural masculinity. It reveals that the masculine associations and the idea of masculinity itself are mere cultural constructions. This interpretation also works effectively because the words and the subjectivity of the Liberace-like pianist gets deconstructed in the second and third movements.²²⁸

Ferneyhough spoke that he has received gender-related criticisms and has been called as an 'alpha-male' composer. He mentioned,

It's usually that they (the critics) assume males are extremely ambitious towards pushing the envelope of a power control of their performers. I think it's total nonsense of course, because the performers choose to play the pieces. Performers have a total control of our fate as composers.²²⁹

Ferneyhough's remark, "performers have a total control of our fate as composers," not only resonates with what Roland Barthes claims of the reader as the *Author*, but also his notation confirms this remark. On the contrary to the stereotypical understanding of his complex notation, his notation system in fact gives the performer a greater role as an interpreter. Stuart Duncan argues that Ferneyhough presents the score as a map where the performer 'filters' through the information to realize the 'world' where "the endless information surround[s] us."²³⁰ He writes,

[...] the complexity of Ferneyhough's music derives not from the informational density of the score, [...] but rather from a coalescence of the dialogues between composer and score, score and performance, and performance and reception. [...] [t]he unfiltered manner of Ferneyhough's composition requires the performer as a relativizing filter. [...] the performer must make decisions regarding the realization of the piece, to choose a route through all the possibilities inherent in the notation.²³¹

²²⁶ See the discussion of *phallogocentrism* in Chapter 2

²²⁷ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

²²⁸ See Case Study #2 in Chapter 2.

²²⁹ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by Michiko Saiki (August 3, 2016).

²³⁰ Stuart Duncan, "Re-complexifying the Function(s) of Notation in the Music of Brian Ferneyhough," 138-147.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 138-150.

Thus, Ferneyhough aims to establish a new relationship with the score by rejecting the function of the notation that promises “a transparent relationship between composer, score, performer, and listener.”²³² Ferneyhough states,

Things in the present day world surely move rather quickly. It seems rather anomalous to expect our art to be easily understandable; I don't see music as providing a sort of breathing space between bouts of confrontation with the outside world! It is also not directly about offering privileged insights, but more about how to create one's own insights when immersed in the complex ambiguity of the art object.²³³

Nicolas Hodges comments, “You learn the complexities of rhythm in a precise way, but something different happens in performance.”²³⁴ His statement suggests how Ferneyhough's complex notation does not “control” the performer, rather, it allows multiplicity of performative interpretations.

The danger of gendered labeling like ‘alpha-male’ is that it creates negative associations before actually acquainting with Ferneyhough's music. Violinist Mieko Kanno states,

If you talk just about Brian's notation, his music becomes secondary to his scores, as if his works were objects and not experiences. But performers can respond to his music in a beautiful way. You never find out all the subtleties of his music until you actually play it.²³⁵

Stereotypes especially impact younger generations and discourage them from having an innocent encounter with new music. Thus, combatting those false gendered associations is an important agenda that musicians need to work on.

By interpreting the first movement of *Opus Contra Naturam* as a masquerade of masculinity, my female body and voice can create a powerful performance. My body that is

²³² Ibid., 138.

²³³ Brian Ferneyhough, interview by James Boros, in James Boros and Richard Toop, *Brian Ferneyhough Collected Writings*, 373.

²³⁴ Tom Service, “Belt up and hold tight.”

²³⁵ Ibid.

loaded with cultural inscription speaks of masculinity, which provokes the audience's normative conceptions and gender stereotypes. Due to this aspect, performing this piece as a female performer makes a strong commentary on history, philosophy, and language. Furthermore, it might potentially help to dispel the myth of masculinity *and* femininity.

Case Study #7: Amy Beth Kirsten (*Speak to Me*)

In Chapter 2, I have discussed how Amy Beth Kirsten's (*Speak to Me*) can be interpreted as a form of *l'écriture féminine* by articulating the transgressive quality of the piece: (1) The sonic depiction of the listening body; (2) Plurality of performance practice given by the creative freedom; (3) Simultaneous embodiment of multiple characters; (4) Transformation of language into sounds; and (5) Revelation of the silenced pianist. This piece also communicates the pain of Echo through the voiceless, silenced body, which creates a vulnerable and intimate performance. This aspect has been discussed in Chapter 3, applying the idea of the voice as a carrier of inner pain.

In this case study, my discussion focuses on the aspect of a female performing female-gendered characters, the performance style known as bio-queen. Instead of a biological male performs an exaggerated femininity as in drag performance, a bio-queen “performs a heightened femininity” as a biological female.²³⁶ In (*Speak to Me*), the nymph Echo is described as “charismatic” and “like an animated, caffeinated storyteller.”²³⁷ For Echo's voice, it is suggested to think of Marilyn Monroe.²³⁸ The goddess Juno is “venomous and sexy” and her voice is

²³⁶ Rachel Devitt, “Girl on Girl: Fat Femmes, Bio-Queens, and Redefining Drag,” in *Queering the Popular Pitch*, ed. Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Routledge, 2013), 29.

²³⁷ Kirsten, (*Speak to Me*), 1.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

described as “low, gravelly, menacing, and sexy.”²³⁹ In my interview with Kirsten, she answered that these suggestions were made in order to give the performer a proper idea for the sound that she was imagining for these characters.²⁴⁰ She was also inspired by the voice of Vicki Ray who she dedicated the piece for. Because I happen to correspond with the gender of the characters, it felt very ‘natural’ to perform as Echo and Juno at first. I simply channeled to my inner hyperactive-self for Echo and my inner ‘strong woman’-self for Juno.

However, this performance impacted me as having a drag-like effect as in Butler’s theory, revealing my understanding of femininity as a cultural construct. I do not consider myself particularly “feminine.” I grew up more like a tomboy, having a clear gendered subjectivity as ‘not the same as other girls.’ Language (both orally and bodily), fashion, favorite colors, and everything one could think of, I would choose what was considered ‘not for girls.’ This manifestation might have been my small rebellion against my sexed body. The older I became, I started behaving more like a traditional ‘woman.’ I still did not want to consider myself as feminine, but I found a middle ground by adapting slightly more woman-like fashion, behavior, and way of thinking. The process of putting myself into this category felt strange and uncomfortable. As the time passed by, it became easier because I ‘successfully’ conformed myself to the norm, what society expects of me.

Performing (*speak to me*) made me aware of how ‘unnatural’ what were considered ‘natural’ gendered expressions were and how gender ideologies and normative conceptions have been ingrained in my subjectivity. By embodying heightened femininity, my understanding of feminine is now unlocked and I can ask the question to myself how much of my subjectivity has been informed by the culture and society I grew up in. Although, for a long time, I was

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Amy Beth Kirsten, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, October 2016).

subconsciously afraid of being categorized as girl, woman, non-speaking subject, and the *Other*, now I met an unfamiliar part of myself who had been pushed away because she was too *feminine*. For the first time, with this experience, I was able to embrace my feminine-self.

Without the investigation of a feminist interpretation, I would have not been able to notice such a valuable opportunity this piece offers. The encounter with this piece in fact allowed me to appreciate my feminine-self because embodying Echo and Juno assured the power of my female body and voice.

Case Study #8: Stuart Saunders Smith *Lazarus*

Lazarus gave me the most comfortable gendered experience. Because of his background as a jazz percussionist, he imagined this piece to be sung by numbers of singers with their own unique voices as in a jazz tradition.²⁴¹ Because of this approach, I felt more responsible for being ‘myself’ rather than trying to embody a particular character.

As a poet himself, Smith’s use of text is very particular. The first two movements have only a few lines of text and the rest is sung with “Ah.” The first movement depicts the biblical story of Lazarus.

Oh Jesus wept his tears in a stream to the tomb bathed Lazarus. Awake.²⁴²

The text is mostly sung except two spoken words, ‘wept’ and ‘awake.’ The second movement is entirely sung. This movement quotes his vocal piece, *Light*.

I always thought, for there to be light, light needed darkness.
That darkness is light that does not know is light yet.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Stuart Saunders Smith, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, August 2016).

²⁴² Smith, *Lazarus*, 1-2.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

The *Light* section is notated as if it is a chant; the simple, chant-like melody and the thought provoking text evoke the warmth of the light.

EXAMPLE 16: Stuart Saunders Smith *Lazarus*, Movement II, Page 3, Line 2²⁴⁴

ds
(Voice) Vision with vibraphone or piano

The image shows a musical score for a voice and piano. The voice part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "I Al ways Thought For there to be Light. Light Needed darkness, but darknes is Light, That does not know its Light yet." The piano accompaniment is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. The music consists of simple, sustained chords and single notes, creating a contemplative and minimalist atmosphere.

The reason for quoting his own composition, Smith answered, “I wanted to contextualize the story of *Lazarus* with the notion of Light - A shadow becomes light again.”²⁴⁵ Although he mentioned that *Lazarus* comes out of the jazz tradition, I did not particularly chose to ‘sing out.’ These two movements with celestial sound world seem to work better with the genuine and sincere voice than the strong singing voice. In fact, because of Smith’s preference with the music being honest, the performer should focus on being herself, instead of acting as a particular persona. The first two movements with simple hymn-like or lullaby-like melodies prepare the audience for the confessional third movement.

As I have discussed in Chapter 3, the third movement portrays a strikingly personal narrative of Smith himself and his friend, Jim. The question that I had to contemplate in this movement was: Who am I to speak this story? In her dissertation, *Performing the Lied*, *Performing the Self: Singing Subjectivity in Germany, 1790-1832*, Jennifer Ronyak discusses the performer’s subjectivity in art song performance and poetry reading. Using Goethe’s *Erster Verlust* as an example, Ronyak explains several historical approaches to performance practice of the text that is written in the first person singular, “I” (*Ich* in this case). One is the amateur performer’s poet-reading style which is to spontaneously react to the text as if she reads it for the

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Stuart Saunders Smith, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, August 2016).

first time. Such performance can express sincere and genuine feelings and it effectively communicates the text. Another is to recite the text as the character, attempting to become the persona of the text. She suggests that these two approaches can be fluidly used in one piece because it is impossible to completely separate the performer's own subjectivity in performance. Ronyak also explains that subjectifying the piece and displaying the performer's individuality in performance have been considered an important element in art song performance. Occasionally composers would adjust gender of the subject in the text in order to match their own imagination of the song.²⁴⁶

Although I can only *imagine* the situation that Smith and Jim went through, when I perform this piece, I try to speak the text as if this is my personal story. The music underneath the text helps me to be in the moment; it allows me to have a spontaneous reaction to the text and the music. In this sense, I am approaching this piece in the amateur poet-reading style and it seems to be effective. In one of the performance I had an interesting experience with the audience. Some of the audience members laughed when I spoke the line, "When he [Jim] got out [of the prison] he went to the same bank, to the same teller, and did the same thing. He turned himself in again, too." Probably they found it funny the fact Jim robbed the same bank twice and turned himself in again. I was surprised at first because I performed in my usual way, which had never received such a reaction until then. However, it made me feel connected to the audience even more; through their voice of laughter, I felt their bodies. Smith commented on my experience,

The audience member each brings their own life and sense of humor. I tell (through the performer), and the rest opens in the listener's mind. I never thought any part of [the] story is funny, but a laugh here or there is nice.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Ronyak, "Performing the Lied," 144-163.

²⁴⁷ Stuart Saunders Smith, interview by Michiko Saiki (written response, August 2016).

Through music, Smith demonstrates the performative nature of language, music, and his ‘self.’ He mentioned in my interview that the ideal performance situation would be to perform from memory so that the performer makes this piece her own because “the character of *Lazarus* is your voice.”²⁴⁸

Conclusion

As examined above, the performer can create meaningful performances by interpreting compositions with a focus on the centrality of gender in musical performance. Ferneyhough’s first movement of *Opus Contra Naturam* can be understood as a masquerade of masculinity which can question and dispel male stereotypes. By enacting the piece through the female body, it can also disrupt female stereotypes. Kirsten’s (*speak to me*) creates a bio-queen performance, which allows the performer to embrace her feminine-self and empowers the female body and voice. Likewise, Smith’s *Lazarus* creates an intimate performance that highlights the power of the voice.

Exploring further on interpretive freedom, I propose these hypothetical performance situations below. Which one(s) of the following conveys to the audience what the piece is about? Which one(s) of the following can be most successful for the composers and performers? Which one(s) of the following is most intriguing?

- (1) A female pianist performing on stage overtly acting ‘feminine’
- (2) A female pianist performing on stage acting like herself
- (3) A female pianist performing backstage (invisible to the audience) overtly acting ‘feminine’
- (4) A female pianist performing backstage acting like herself

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

- (5) A male pianist performing on stage overtly acting ‘feminine’
- (6) A male pianist performing on stage acting like himself
- (7) A male pianist performing backstage overtly acting ‘feminine’
- (8) A male pianist performing backstage acting like himself

Among these situations, (3), (4), (7), and (8) experiment with the visibility of the body. As discussed in Chapter 3, visual framing helps the audience perceive the performer’s gender. Therefore, performances from the backstage create an interesting level of confusion for the audience because they cannot see the pianist’s body. Theoretically, the audience should still hear the gendered voice because they cannot help but bring their unique understanding of the male or female voice to the performance. Situations (1), (3), (5), and (7) reveal the audience’s awareness. Exaggerated gender performance runs the risk of perpetuating gender stereotypes, but those who are aware of the issues of stereotypes would interpret it as drag or bio-queen performances. Situations (2), (4), (6), and (8) put the untrained voice in the foreground. If the pianist performs as herself, it might be perceived as sincere, genuine, and emotional. However, it might lack excitement or simply become boring for some audience members. These hypothetical situations can be used to open up discussions of stereotypes and normative conceptions. In the bigger picture, the more people become aware and are able to openly talk about these topics, the better society will become.

In this chapter, by taking a position as the *Author*, I can successfully enact all three compositions in ways that work for my own personality. When one interprets a composition, personalizing it by inserting one’s gendered-self, the act of performance itself becomes an act of writing the ‘self.’ Thus, a vocalizing pianist performance can be understood as a form of *l’écriture féminine*; the performer writes her ‘self’ through gendered performance. Exploration of

creative and unique ways to perform this genre will ultimately free us from the confinement of gender ideologies.

CHAPTER 5. THE FUTURE OF THE VOCALIZING PIANIST

“Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth. Our naphtha will spread, throughout the world, without dollars—black or gold—nonassessed values that will change the rules of the old game.”

— *Hélène Cixous*²⁴⁹

Possible Directions for Future Research

This paper was my first attempt to contextualize the genre of vocalizing pianist in alignment with feminist theories and ideologies. I acknowledge that there were numerous other possibilities to navigate my discussion that I did not take. This research focused on the performer’s interpretive aspect of the genre influenced by my belief that the genre gives more responsibility to the performer compared to any other genres because it puts the performer in such a vulnerable position. I will introduce a few ideas to be investigated in future research.

(1) Audience’s Perception. It would be interesting to conduct surveys of the audience members and investigate their reception of the pieces, especially in the hypothetical performance situations that I proposed in the previous chapter. **(2) Body and Semantics in Performance.** It might be useful to review theater/performance scholarly literature to further explore the material body and its implication with the semantics. Because the pianist is usually fixed at one position in this genre, I only examined figurative meanings of the body. However, this aspect could be interesting to incorporate in future compositions. **(3) Performer’s Subjectivity.** My research did not go into the discussion of the performer’s perception of the self. As discussed, the vocalizing pianist genre puts the performer in such a vulnerable position, which might intensify the constant negotiation of the self-definition that happens in daily life.²⁵⁰ It can be an useful avenue to explore the genre’s effect on the performer herself and how it affects the decision-making

²⁴⁹ Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 880.

²⁵⁰ Mackenzie, “Imagining Oneself Otherwise.”

process. **(4) Exploration of Identity.** I did not discuss how my nationality as Japanese influences my decision-making and interpretation as well as how my performance in English as a non-native English speaker influences the audience's perception and interpretation of the piece. Other than gender, nationality, or ethnicity, the makers one's identity such as race, age, class, and sexual orientation create a complex web to inform each category and shape one's subjectivity. This would be a great subject to explore further when more compositions are written featuring different types of identities. **(5) Use of the Technology.** I acknowledge that I did not touch on the use of the technology, such as microphone and electronics, in this genre. The performer needs to determine if amplification is needed for the voice, depending on the size of the hall, instrument, and also how loud one can vocalize. The use of the microphone can be an advantage because the microphone enables the performer to bring "individual vocal artifacts and artistic detail to our attention with great clarity."²⁵¹ Thus, the microphone can amplify not only the volume of the voice, but also the "sense of intimacy."²⁵² Because vocalizing pianist compositions also require softer voices such as whispers and breathing sounds, the microphone helps to balance the volume between the instrument and the voice. Furthermore, the use of technology in this genre such as live processing of the voice or a pre-recorded voice is an interesting avenue to investigate with future research.

Prospects for the Future of the Vocalizing Pianist

Through a feminist interpretation of the genre, the vocalizing pianist can now be understood as a powerful genre that (1) demonstrates the performative nature of gender; (2)

²⁵¹ Salzman and Dézsy, *The new music theater*, 23.

²⁵² John Potter, "Singer-songwriter," *Grove Music Online*, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.bgsu.edu:8080/subscriber/article/grove/music/46855>.

offers a space for *l'écriture féminine*; (3) creates a vulnerable performance through personal narratives; and (4) grants greater interpretive responsibility to the performer.

Because it does not specify the performer's gender or voice type, performing this genre potentially creates a collision of identity: a woman performing a man; Japanese performing British; a non-native English speaker speaking as a native English speaker; the heterosexual performing the homosexual; and many more infinite possibilities. Although cross-gender, cross-identity performances have been widely practiced in vocal music such as opera and art songs, with the emergence of the vocalizing pianist genre, pianists are now entering this unfamiliar field.

Programming those performances would thus challenge composers, pianists, and the audience, provoking an interrogation of their normative conceptions and stereotypes regarding not only gender, but also race, nationality, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. The reception of such a performance would vary based on the cultural background of each audience member as well as the social environment of the time and location wherein the performance takes place. Thus, the vocalizing pianist performance functions as a mirror which reflects a society filled with culturally constructed ideas about the body, gender, and sex.

If more pianists perform this genre and focus on the gendered aspect of vocalizing pianist performance, the impact those performances will make on contemporary classical music in its reception, consumption, and practice would be enormous. Because the genre itself is transgressive, programming these pieces challenges the notion of what is considered "acceptable" as the classical concert programming. This is not only limited to vocalizing pianists; other vocalizing instrumentalists can also make the same impact and work together to combat stereotypes.

Eventually, my utopian goal would be that this repertoire gets performed, understood, and discussed so much that gender performance tendency and stereotypes are deconstructed. The advancement that has been made towards equality, not only of gender, but for many other categories (race, class, sexual orientation, etc.) is not enough, as of today. No matter how we try, the day one will say “gender or race does not exist” or “inequality does not exist” will not come, because history simply will not be erased and our differences cannot be banished. Upon acknowledging our differences—color, shape, language, belief, and everything that is intersected to create one’s subjectivity, we will finally move forward.

As a 21st-century musician, I feel responsible for creating a better musical environment for the future generations. With the interrogation of this genre through the lens of feminism, my eyes are now opened and I am able to question my normative conceptions and gender ideologies that I had hardly considered or acknowledged before this research. Now that I understand the power of my sexed body and voice, my job as a new music advocate and educator is to continue to use them to write my ‘self.’ As Hélène Cixous proclaims, to “write her self,” one must write your ‘self.’ When vulnerability foregrounds the piece, it creates enormous power to touch people’s hearts because, in the end, the personal is, I believe, universal.

The journey has just begun; it will take some time for people to get on board. As Nietzsche writes,

This is what happens to us in music: First one has to learn to hear a figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate it and delimit it as a separate life. Then it requires some exertion and good will to tolerate it in spite of its strangeness, to be patient with its appearance and expression, and kindhearted about its oddity. Finally there comes a moment when we are used to it, when we wait for it, when we sense that we should miss it if it were missing [...] That is how we have learned to love all things that we now love.²⁵³

²⁵³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 262.

If more people will join me on this journey and the vocalizing pianist becomes more widely performed, it can become the norm. Once that is attained, my utopian vision of a world where people embrace each other's differences and treat each other fairly with love and compassion may come true. But for now, to move towards that goal, we must continue using our bodies and voices and embodying gendered characters in order to embrace our own gendered-selves.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN FERNEYHOUGH

August 3, 2016
At Darmstadt Summer Course for New Music
Darmstadt, Germany

MS: What was the reason to cut out the specific part from the entire opera?

BF: That's easy. There are seven scenes in the opera and five of them can be performed separately. So they are pieces basically. They just fit in the instrumentation and the dramatic circumstances of the whole opera. The first scene, the death of Benjamin, and the fifth scene where he is in the underworld cannot be performed apart from the opera. The piano piece was already right from the beginning considered to be a solo project. I liked the idea of doing quite a big cycle, seven different scenes. But the middle one, this one (*Opus Contra Naturam*), we only have a very small instrumentation. It seemed interesting to do it rather than having a big one in the middle. Also the most personal, not for me, but because there is an individual who is reacting to the instrument. And obviously some of the things can only be realized in the opera itself, like costumes and so on. Essentially, it was just a sort of rather Manichaeian thing that you've got black against white, and the whole thing is about sin and redemption, and the history, memory. So it seemed good for me to have this dissolute pianist who is drunken. He's taken drugs, and it's night in a Las Vegas bar. Everybody is out. He is the only one left awake and he is just... what should I say, he is passing the time with himself. And so he starts talking to the piano. And of course, he was white, the piano was black. He is the Ahura Mazda and against the Ahriman of the black piano. And it's very good symbolism which I wouldn't have used in that simple form unless I could make the materials very complex. So each of the three movement has a very particular interpretation of the role of subject. What we understand by individual with regard to the opposites. In this case, the pianist and the piano. So we think of the piano very much having a life of its own. It's got its own psyche. And so, particularly in second movement, the piano answers back. It starts to want to play tonal music. The pianist gets angry and shouts at it. That's the longest movement because it has a great deal of interaction in there.

The first movement is little piano at all, just two extreme registers. The text which I made is a series of sort of questions, like a viva voce almost, with absurd answers. It was important in this movement to make sure the piano was subsidiary. It wasn't front of listening. The front of listening is these questions and answers. So it's only in the second movement that the piano starts to get independent. And the third movement is rather funny because I have to mix two types of material. One is where he is speaking, he speaks every note of the piano. He speaks syllable. And the other material which is filtered in is the series of ridiculously banal fanfares. I know they are banal. [vocally imitates the fanfare material] During the end of this piece, Benjamin is descending to the underworld. The third piece is a Monteverdian chorus of trumpets welcoming him except played by devils of course, and not trumpets.

Ah, and yes, the first version of the piece didn't have text in the third movement.

MS: Ah, that's why the solo version doesn't have text.

BF: It was added only twelve days before the first performance. It's very virtuosic.

MS: Did you specify the instrumentation as 'speaking pianist'? What was the reason for using the term? Did you know any other pieces written for speaking pianist?

BF: Well, I've always been interested in the very general question of how the human voice can be used in modern music. There are really two extremes. One of them is what I would call *Pierrot Lunaire* extreme where the vocal gesture infects the instruments. We understand the instruments because the voice has demonstrated those gestures. The other piece would be Boulez's *Le Marteau sans maître* which is the exact opposite; the voice exists only to imitate instruments, alto flute, viola, wonderful legato lines. And that's what the voice does. I didn't think either of those was particularly satisfactory for anybody else. So I decided, um, I wanted to go a little further back in the tradition of melodrama. And of course we do have a music with *recita* [*sic* = recitative]. You find Schoenberg notably uses *recita* in *A Survivor of Warsaw* and *Ode to Napoleon*. He also uses it to great effect in *Moses und Aron* because Moses never sings. He just speaks. Wonderful end of the second act has the violins in unison soaring up high and Moses stands and says, "O Wort, du Wort, das mir fehlt." A word, the word that I lack. It's such a wonderful element here, and I'm glad that he never wrote a third act. [laugh]

MS: Was Nicholas Hodges the only person who played the opera production?

BF: Yes, he was the only one who played the opera production. I have to have the same person for opera performances because there is a tremendous amount of acting. He does other things; Nic [Hodges] comes on stage several times in different roles, not playing the piano. He does the spoken part in the piece for ensemble and speaker, that's the sixth scene. And he doesn't play anything he just speaks.

MS: Was there a specific way for Nic to act?

BF: Well, he worked with me. There are things in the first piece where he has to speak as an Oxbridge professor. Probably only English people will know that. [laugh] I had to coach him in getting that sort of bored approach. Nic was very good at that.

MS: Have any female pianists performed this piece?

BF: Yes, they have. There were two in America who played it. But what I found was that the register of the female voice gets damped by the piano.

MS: According to the interview on Huffpost, the pianist is supposed to appear in Liberace-like costume. Does this mean you have already imagined it to be a male character when you were writing it?

BF: I imagined it to be a male character.

MS: But the text itself is philosophy that can be shared among any genders.

BF: Absolutely. It's not the piece whose content is particular to men, it's that under the circumstances of the performance, he (Hodges) was the one I had, so it's been done many times with him, but there's no second production so...

MS: Do you think it's still effective when performed by a woman?

BF: I wondered about that. If I could see it where she would come on dressed perhaps as a female pierrot; sparkles, sequene, ballet skirt. That might do it. It has to be artificial because I am commenting on Walter Benjamin and his idea of the Natural as opposed to the Artificial. What creates aura? What is it about objects which makes them more than they seem to be at first? I've always very interested in shadows and the way shadows interact with the objects. It's like the souls of the objects become shadows and they gradually align themselves with the object. I wrote a piece called *Kurze Schatten II*, a guitar piece, which deals with this exact question. And then, would I object it otherwise, no. But then the pianist has to understand that they have to do the other movements as well if it's done in the opera context.

MS: Do you think it will create a dissonance in the audience because of the presence of the female body?

BF: oh, maybe? Certainly could be done, in the context.

MS: Is there anything from the opera that the performer needs to consider when performing as a solo piece?

BF: It is quite explicit in a sort of way. Good/evil; eternity, as opposed to the moment; expression as opposed the structure. All of these opposites are bouncing back and forth. We have to remember that we are not dealing so much with the person of Walter Benjamin, we are dealing with his alter ego, his cultural radiation of Benjamin's thinking across society which is quite large. He dies at the end of scene one. So, because it takes place in a nightclub, which is very artificial environment, I guess we are dealing here with the elevated and the banal coming together. The high, expressionistic, twentieth-century piano comes into crushing contact with the sleazy bar somewhere in Las Vegas where everybody is spaced out on heroin. I think of this pianist very much as not exclusive to this opera. What would I call him, shaman? A magic man in a primitive society. Maybe Odin with his two Ravens... Usually shamans have to suffer in order to bring the truth. They sometimes get hung up on trees for weeks on end.

It's anomalous. He appears as a human figure. But many gods appear in human form on occasions. I don't know if I think of him as a god exactly, but I imagine him as a facilitator of godly.

MS: Do you consider a visual aspect in your musical writing? For example, I received a comment on my performance of the first movement and the fact my arms were spread out created a strong imagery.

BF: Ah yes, it's the Jesus analogy. Jesus was a shaman as well.

MS: I also do love the combination of two extreme registers.

BF: That refers to the end of *Moses and Aron*, the end of the second act; high violins and low voice.

MS: In the third movement, how should the voice and piano align?

BF: It's performed by aligning the syllables with a note. The piano material is in three rhythmic structures but the pianist has to make a composite of all three of those when he speaks. And he has to maintain the relative dynamics of these things; if he plays a very loud note, the voice has to be very loud as well. It's like the trinity, three in one, you see?

MS: What were the things that you wanted to convey from the third movement?

BF: You need to understand that oldest pseudo-serial type of stuff that's going on in three parts. It's simply chromatic scales which have been permuted. Everytime I play that material, it becomes more and more linear. So the last time it goes from the bottom registers to top and we hear it as just a chromatic stuff, it's nothing. It sounds like a serious movement, but it's not. It's just a distortion of the basic ascent. The ascent is the opposite of what takes place now at the end that where Walter Benjamin goes down into hell.

MS: Would you speak about the text?

BF: For the second and third movement, I took from Charles Bernstein's text. He'd written a text for the first movement but I said I'm sorry I can't use this because it's too American centric, it's like a New York speak. I didn't want that. I wanted something incredibly academic.

MS: What about the second and third?

BF: It's like an invented language, as I understand his text. It's all algorithmically generated from certain original materials of either Benjamin or the poets he deals with. I didn't even ask him where it came from. I set it according to my own needs. Same as the third movement. You are not make any sense of it, really.

MS: In what ways this piece can be performed most effectively?

BF: In a nightclub. With one of those circling gloves flickers everywhere. Yes, absolutely. Decadence. The whole point is the piano wants to revert its decadent self.

MS: Would it still work if the female performer to speak as she would normally speaks?

BF: You have female professors. She can choose to do the responses in more of a subversive way. So the question is [demonstrate with the wider inflection], then [answering with the quieter voice]. You could show the black and the white in a different way.

MS: Rather female pretending to be female, you prefer she performs as she would perform.

BF: Oh yeah. You have to make it clear in the costume that she is essentially the white magic Shaman; the piano is the black magic.

MS: Have you ever received any gender-related reviews about your work?

BF: Yes, I'm thought to be a very macho composer, alpha-male composer. That's what they say, don't look at me!

MS: Any examples of what they say?

BF: Oh good lord. I try never to remember these things. Let me think, though. [silence] It's usually that they assume males are extremely ambitious towards pushing the envelope of a power control of their performers. I think it's total nonsense of course, because the performers choose to play the pieces. Performers have a total control of our fate as composers.

APPENDIX B
WRITTEN INTERVIEW WITH STUART SAUNDERS SMITH

[A letter received on August 23, 2016]

MS: This was co-dedicated to myself and percussionist Joey Van Hassel. What motivated you to write this piece based on a biblical story?

SS: I have composed a number of Christian musics. I feel close to a gentle religion. Jesus was powerfully in love - In love with the people of the world. He, like all of us, is with and in God.

MS: In what ways do you think the performer's vocal register affects the perception of this piece?

SS: Not really. This music comes out of a jazz tradition where tunes are sung by a number of singers, each with an individual voice.

MS: Do you think this piece is constructed around a particular character, or it is all your voice? Or can it be understood as a performer's voice?

SS: The character of *Lazarus* is your voice. All music must be owned by the performer.

MS: About the first movement. As you often incorporate singing or speaking in your percussion pieces, this movement uses singing text and singing without text. What was your intention behind this choice?

SS: My intention was/is to tell the story, lightly and with a pure heart.

MS: Did you write the text on your own?

SS: I wrote all the texts.

MS: What made you decide to make the text "wept" and "awake" spoken instead of sung?

SS: That is the way the music was given to me. I don't compose; I transcribe.

MS: The second movement quotes your two-female voice song, *Light*. What was the reason for this quotation?

SS: I wanted to contextualize the story of *Lazarus* with the notion of *Light* - A shadow becomes light again.

MS: The third movement is particularly striking because of the contents of the story that you shared here. What motivated you to share this story in this piece?

SS: Music must be honest. The story really happened. Good music is, at its core, real.

MS: Do you imagine your voice reciting the text?

SS: No.

MS: In what ways should the performer tell this story to the audience?

SS: Tell the story clearly, not overly dramatic. It is a simple story of hope.

MS: I encountered a few occasions where a few audience members laughed about the fact that Jim robbed the bank and turned himself in twice. Did you intend this to be funny? What is your thought about this particular reaction of the audience?

SS: The audience member each brings their own life and sense of humor. I tell (through the performer), and the rest opens in the listener's mind. I never thought any part of [the] story is funny, but a laugh here or there is nice.

MS: After the storytelling, there is a singing at the end of the movement. I find it particularly moving. What was your intention to end this piece with singing? There is one pitch in the melody that is not to be sung. What was the reason behind this choice?

SS: What pitch are you referring to? Perhaps it is a typo? Singing is the person laid bare. The song at the end lends a certain gravity which I wanted.

MS: In what ways do you think this piece can be performed most effectively?

SS: By memory.

MS: In what ways do you think performer's gender affects the performance of your piece?

SS: None.

MS: Have you received any reviews that mention the gender of the performer/character or your gender?

SS: No.

APPENDIX C
WRITTEN INTERVIEW WITH AMY BETH KIRSTEN

[An E-mail response received on October 5, 2016]

MS: When you are writing the piece, in what ways did you consider the gender of the performer or the character?

ABK: I don't consider gender when composing; I consider the personality and inner charm of the player I'm writing for and the character I'm writing about. The piece was composed for Vicki Ray, so I got to know her playing and the sound and capabilities of her voice before beginning my work. It was her playing and her voice that inspired the sound world for the piece.

MS: What motivated you to take on this particular part of Greek mythology?

ABK: At the time, Vicki was putting together a program focused on myth – she was interested in investigating female mythological characters. I was initially hesitant to have a prescribed program in mind, especially one that is focused on gender, as that is not an artistic subject that resonates with me. Gender is a political subject – and I am not a political composer in any way. So I was hesitant. In order for me to do my best work I need to find an artistic impulse that is my own; usually that means I have to find a character that I'm in love with in order to be my most free creatively. But because I adore Vicki, and because I didn't know very much about mythology, I thought this would be a great opportunity to learn. So I decided to do a little research to see if there were any myths that interested me. After several months I came upon the story of Echo and Narcissus and realized that no one had ever really told the story from Echo's point of view. I became intrigued and began to work with some musical ideas – eventually coming to a place where I couldn't *not* write the piece.

To my knowledge, the initial program that Vicki had in mind never came to fruition. (*speak to me*) was programmed on a concert of works unrelated to myth.

I'm actually glad, because I think it's a much stronger artistic choice to make programming choices that are not gender-exclusive.

MS: Do you imagine a particular tone of voice for Echo and Juno? (high, low, slow, fast) How did you make textual choices?

ABK: Echo is a nymph – a mythological spirit of nature imagined as a beautiful maiden inhabiting rivers or other natural locations. In my mind's ear, her voice is more melodious than Juno's. Because Juno is an ancient Roman goddess, daughter of Saturn and sister (but also the wife) of the chief god Jupiter, I imagined her voice to be deeper and somewhat raspy – especially when angry.

Because I wanted to create two characters with one performer's voice/piano, I knew that I would have to assign each character a particular vocal tessitura. Therefore, Echo's voice is high and breathy and Juno's is low and raspy.

MS: Do you imagine particular body gestures in this piece?

ABK: No, actually, there are no movements that are prescribed. But how each performer embodies the two characters is fascinating to me.

MS: How did you develop the character Echo?

ABK: In my research I discovered that Echo speaks very quickly and likes to tell stories, and that her storytelling is how she distracted Juno so Jupiter could go and “fool around” with another goddess.

In order to develop the sound of Echo, I did a lot of vocal/piano improvisations; I recorded myself speaking as the character, telling stories and eventually I began to find musical material that was compelling to me. Eventually I realized that the mid to high register of the piano is associated with Echo’s voice; and the low register of the piano is associated with Juno’s voice (a reflection of the range distribution of each character vocally).

MS: How would you describe her personality?

ABK: She’s very animated, enchanting, and persuasive. She is someone who people are enamored with once she starts telling a story. She speaks very quickly and enjoys the sound of her own voice. There is a magical sense about her, as if she is hypnotizing you with her voice.

MS: Echo is partly speaking English, and partly gibberish. What was your intention for this approach?

ABK: I like the idea that the audience is eavesdropping on this scene; in a sense the audience is a voyeur. The story Echo spins in movement 1 is overheard by the audience, yet they aren’t able to make out every word. The gibberish is intended to be the words that they can’t understand. Another interpretation could simply be that Echo is speaking so quickly, and so animatedly, that sometimes this devolves into only sounds of gibberish.

MS: The piano is imitating the inflection of the speech and occasionally overpowers the voice, what effect were you going for?

ABK: The overpowering piano reflects Juno’s psychological state as Echo is telling the story.

MS: Echo sings “can you hear in my voice I love you,” what was the emotional reason for her to sing that sentence? What was your intention behind this choice?

ABK: These pitches and words are important throughout the piece. In fact, they return in an important way in the last movement.

In movement 1 these words are simply a part of the story that Echo is telling (i.e. one of her invented characters is saying these words to another). The irony is, she will play these words/pitches over and over in the last movement as she tries to speak to Narcissus, whom she loves but cannot speak to.

MS: Juno remains silent throughout the movement; however, her presence is apparent through the low cluster chords. What was your intention in this choice?

ABK: To me, the piano reflects Juno's psychological state as Echo is telling the story.

MS: The text of the second movement is written by Mariko Nagai. What was the working process with her?

ABK: Mariko and I met in Bellagio, Italy when we were both artist fellows at the Rockefeller Foundation. Shortly after this fellowship I received this commission from Vicki Ray. Mariko and I were looking for a project to work on together and this seemed perfect.

I commissioned Mariko to write the text for this movement. I told her the subject and explained what I was trying to do musically and she put together this wonderful text. She allowed me to make a few edits, to repeat some phrases, and to slightly restructure what she had written.

MS: How did you develop the character of Juno?

ABK: Juno is a powerful goddess who was tricked by Echo. In my imagination she sounds like what she is – powerful and slightly terrifying. My aim was to create a piano and vocal language that reflects these characteristics.

MS: You describe the voice of Juno as “sexy and always in charge,” is this your image of “strong woman”?

ABK: I was not thinking generally, or about gender. I was thinking about this specific character. The description I used in the score has only one function: it was used to help the performer understand and evoke a particular vocal sound and character motivation.

MS: On the other hand, you describe Echo's voice being whispery “like Marilyn Monroe” what was your intention behind this description?

ABK: My intention was similar to what I wrote above. Character descriptions are used to help performers evoke a particular vocal sound and to give them a concrete sense of how to approach the sound world of the character.

MS: In the third movement Echo loses her voice. In what ways did you depict her feelings in the musical language?

ABK: Echo's voice is her most essential asset; it defines her. After all, she is a storyteller. Therefore she is utterly destroyed by the spell Juno cast on her making her able to only repeat things that are said *to* her. It is my hope that the music of the 3rd movement renders Echo's psychological state: how her sadness intensifies into panic before she, in the end, accepts what she has become.

MS: In what ways did you consider the presence of the performer's voice in this movement?

ABK: The performer's "voice" is present in the piano part (i.e. the piano repeats a phrase that was sung in the first movement "can't you hear in my voice I love you" – this repeating fragment acts as a memory, regret, and also despair).

MS: In what ways do you think this piece can be performed most effectively?

ABK: I think it's essential that performers have a strong ability to express the musical personality of each of the characters.

I've heard some people say that you have to be a good actor in order to make this piece successful. I don't agree with that. In order to make this piece successful, I think a player has to feel that their voice is an essential *part of their instrument*; they have to be connected to the sound and potential of their voice; they have to see themselves as a kind of "super-instrument" whose vocabulary is comprised of piano, voice, and body.

MS: Have you had non-female pianists perform this piece? What did you think of the performance?

ABK: Yes!. There is a pianist in London, Adam Swayne, who has performed this piece incredibly well. His interpretation of the characters was quite earnest, bold, and very effective. One of the best performances I've heard. (I believe he has a recording of this, if you'd like to be in touch with him let me know and I'll send you his email address.)

MS: Have you received any reviews that mention the gender of the performer/character or your gender?

ABK: No, thank goodness! The reviews have only talked about the music.

MS: What format do you think this piece is most effectively presented, audio only or live performance/video?

ABK: This piece works well in any setting. I've heard some wonderful audio recordings of this piece (yours is one of my favorites!)

APPENDIX D

HSRB INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT



Informed Consent Document

My name is Michiko Saiki. I am a doctoral candidate in Contemporary Music with specialization in piano performance at Bowling Green State University. This study is being conducted as part of a research project for my thesis document. You are invited to be in this study because I am interested in the compositional process of your piece *Opus Contra Naturam* and your ideas about the effect of performer's genders.

Purpose/Benefits

The purpose of this study is to investigate composers' compositional processes of the pieces for vocalizing pianist. I aim to seek the possibility for re-interpretation and re-theorization of the genre to be one that creates female-centric spaces and that offers an opportunity for female expressive modes. Through this study, I hope to bring more attention, understanding, and recognition to your work. Furthermore, I will conduct an analysis of your works using feminist literary theory with the intent of helping other composers and pianists towards a new approach to the genre and to your music, and successful interpretation and performance of your works.

Procedure

In order to have a thorough understanding of your ideas and your opinions, I will interview you via telephone, Skype, or in person according to your preference. All the conversations during the interviews will be audio-recorded. Any explanations or further clarification of any questions will be provided if requested. The amount of time required for the interview over phone will vary. You are encouraged to answer as briefly or in as much detail as you like. I estimate the process to take approximate one to two hours total for a primary interview and up to two (2) hours for a follow-up interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or stop participation at any time without penalty. You will have the opportunity to read and approve the interview transcripts, findings, and final document. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University or any institution involved in the research.

Confidentiality

Since the information I will gather from the interviews is directly related to your music, your responses will not be confidential - you will be named as an interviewee. Until the document is

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published, the information from our interview will be stored in a password-protected computer. During the writing of my document, I will be the only person to have access to your interview answers. When the research is done, if you agree, I will include the transcription of our interview as part of the document. The audio recording of the interview will not be made available to the general public, put on a website, or shared with people outside of academic purposes.

Risks

I do not perceive any likely risks to you as a participant in this study. The risk of participation is no greater than that experienced in daily life.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation, you may contact me via email msaiki@bgsu.edu. You can either email me the scan of the signed consent form or mail it to Meusdorfer Strasse 57 Leipzig 04277 Germany.

My advisor, Dr. Thomas Rosenkranz, can be reached at trosenk@bgsu.edu or 419-372-2907. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you may contact the Human Rights Subjects Review Board Chair at (419)372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu

Thank you very much for your time, and for participation in this project.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

Name

Brian Fernyhough

Date

3 August 2016



Informed Consent Document

My name is Michiko Saiki. I am a doctoral candidate in Contemporary Music with specialization in piano performance at Bowling Green State University. This study is being conducted as part of a research project for my thesis document. You are invited to be in this study because I am interested in the compositional process of your piece *Lazarus* and your ideas about the effect of performer's genders.

Purpose/Benefits

The purpose of this study is to investigate composers' compositional processes of the pieces for vocalizing pianist. I aim to seek the possibility for re-interpretation and re-theorization of the genre to be one that creates female-centric spaces and that offers an opportunity for female expressive modes. Through this study, I hope to bring more attention, understanding, and recognition to your work. Furthermore, I will conduct an analysis of your works using feminist literary theory with the intent of helping other composers and pianists towards a new approach to the genre and to your music, and successful interpretation and performance of your works.

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Name *Stuart Saunders Smith* Date *August 17, 2016*
 Stuart Saunders Smith



Informed Consent Document

My name is Michiko Saiki. I am a doctoral candidate in Contemporary Music with specialization in piano performance at Bowling Green State University. This study is being conducted as part of a research project for my thesis document. You are invited to be in this study because I am interested in the compositional process of your piece (*speak to me*) and your ideas about the effect of performer's genders.

Purpose/Benefits

The purpose of this study is to investigate composers' compositional processes of the pieces for vocalizing pianist. I aim to seek the possibility for re-interpretation and re-theorization of the genre to be one that creates female-centric spaces and that offers an opportunity for female expressive modes. Through this study, I hope to bring more attention, understanding, and recognition to your work. Furthermore, I will conduct an analysis of your works using feminist literary theory with the intent of helping other composers and pianists towards a new approach to the genre and to your music, and successful interpretation and performance of your works.

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Name  Date Oct 5, 2016
Amy Beth Kirsten